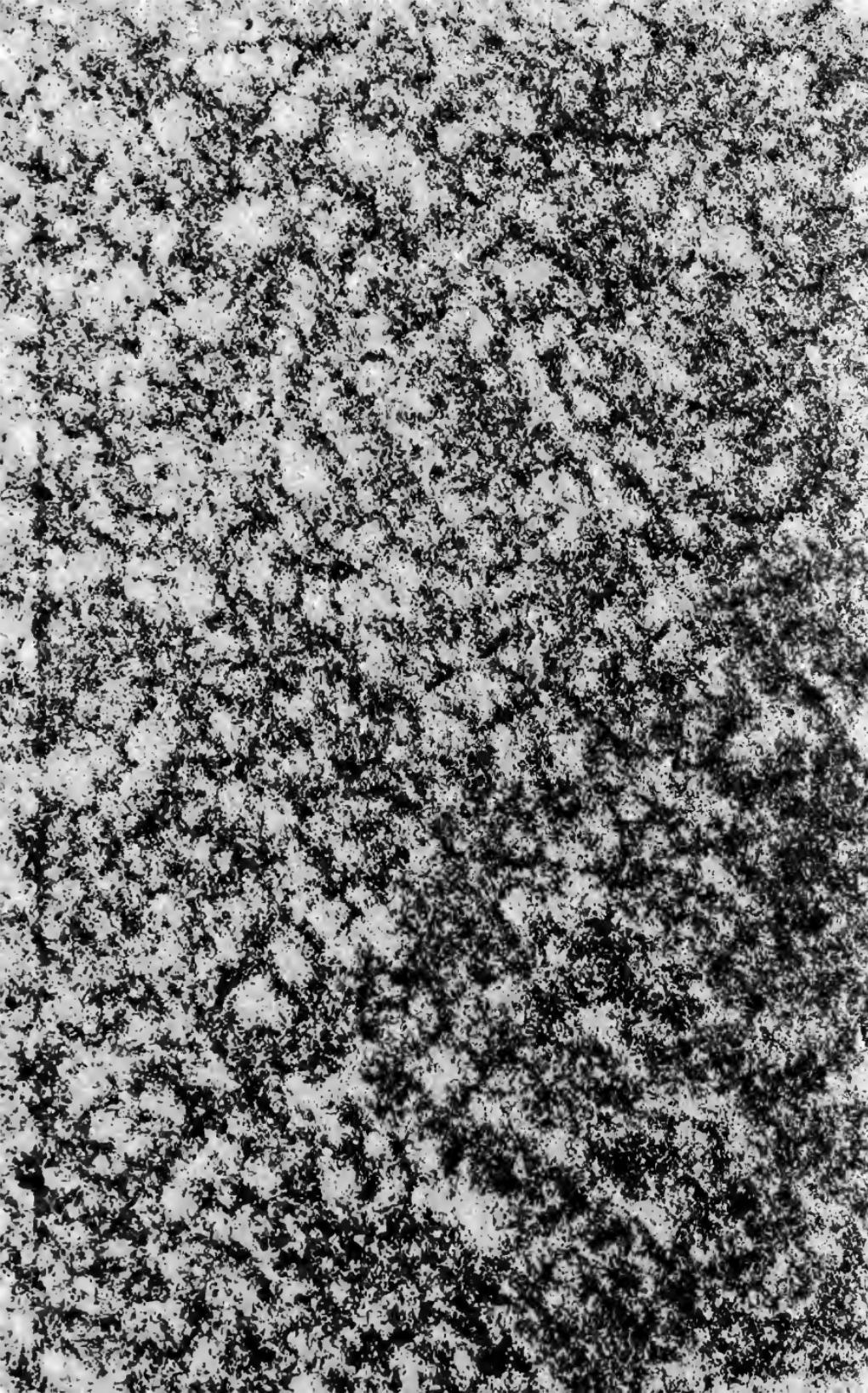


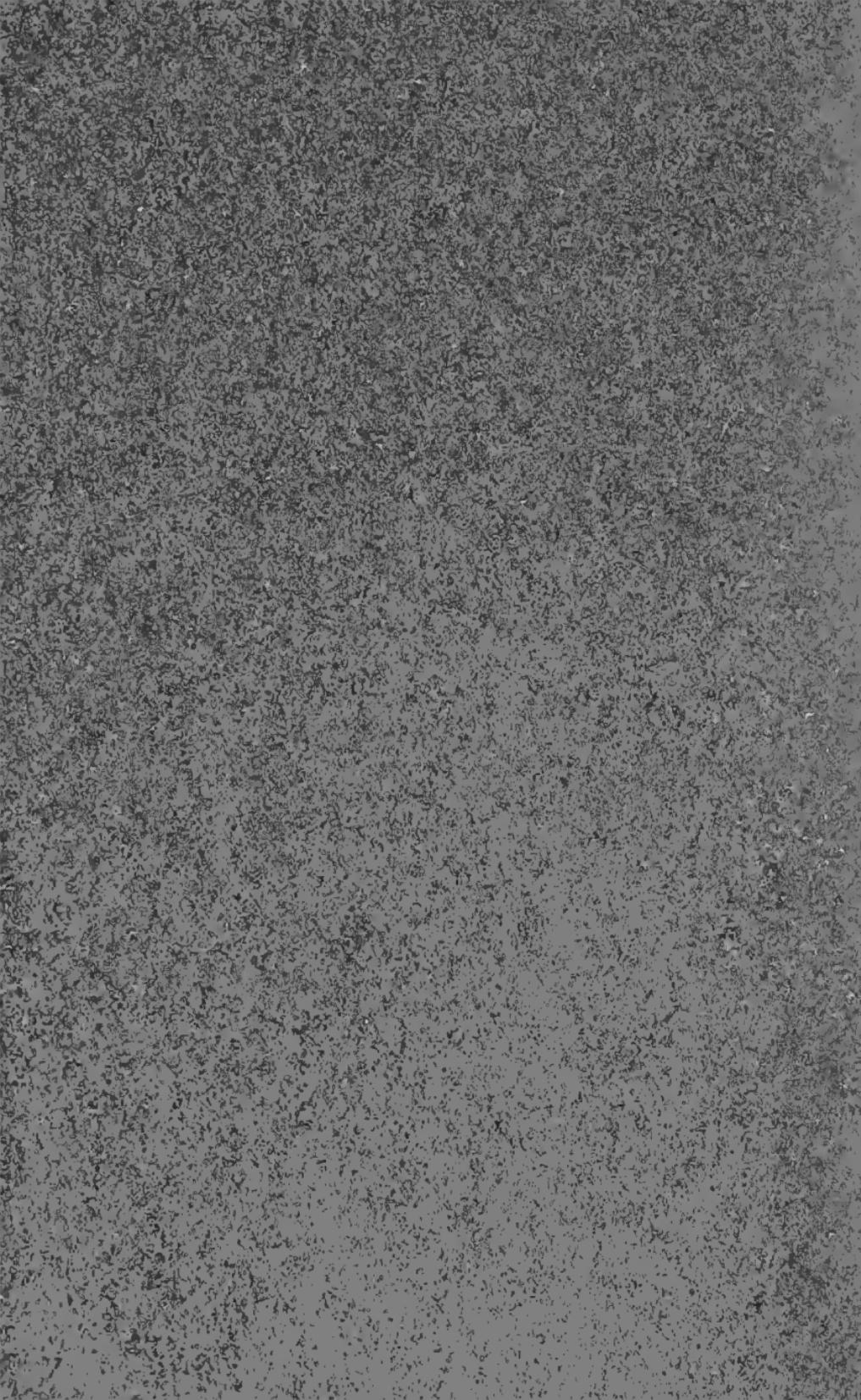


A Century of Service

1815 - 1915







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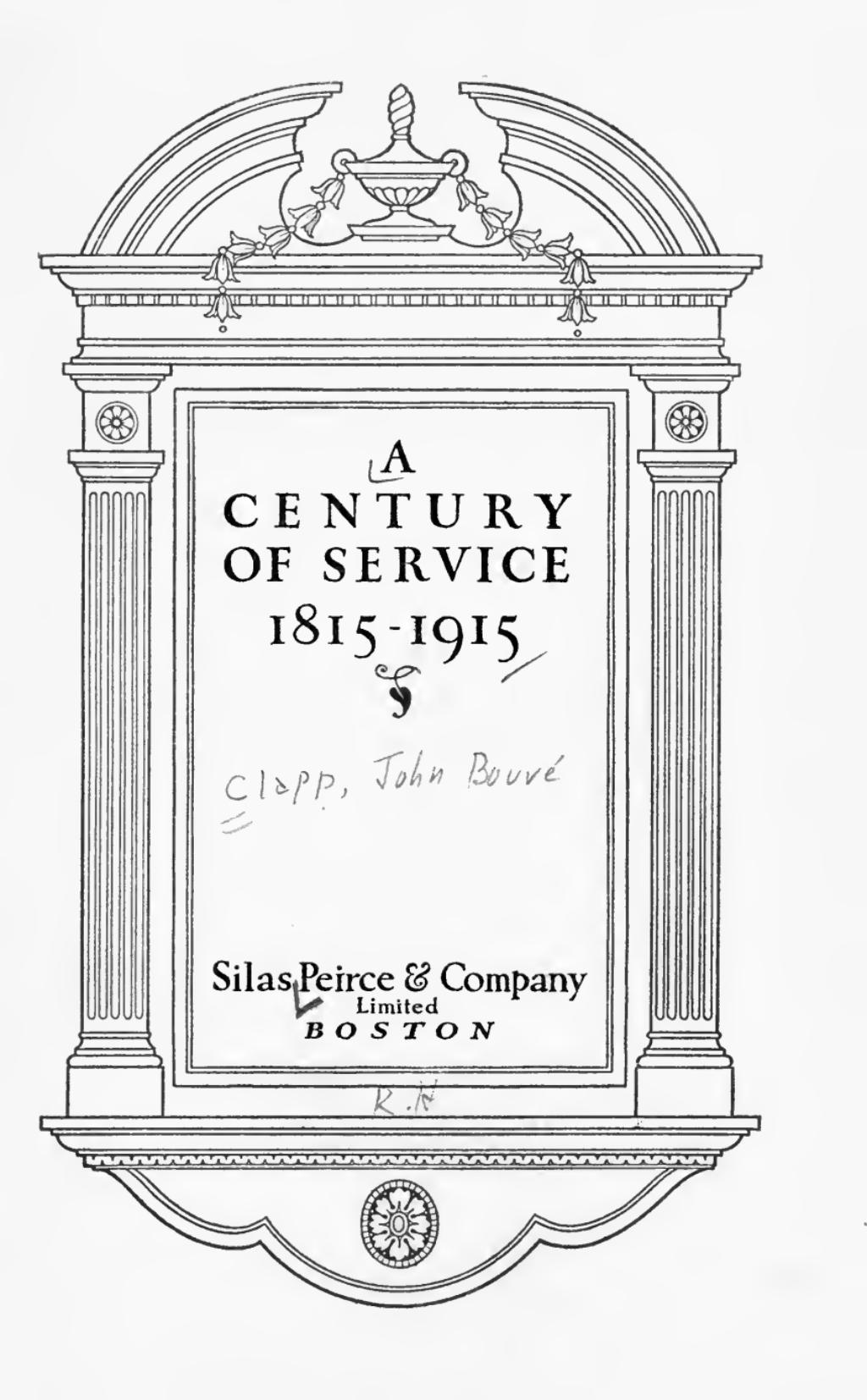
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A
C E N T U R Y
O F S E R V I C E
1815-1915





Silas Peice



A
CENTURY
OF SERVICE
1815-1915

Clapp, John Bouré

Silas Peirce & Company
Limited
BOSTON

R.N.



Copyright, 1915
By Silas Peirce & Co. Ltd.

PRESS OF MURRAY AND EMERY COMPANY
KENDALL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE

TO OUR CUSTOMERS
WHO HAVE MADE THIS HISTORY POSSIBLE
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

*“A Century of Service” — thus the years
Have kept a record of the good deeds done
By all the men whose training sprang from one
Who started doubtfully 'mid hopes and fears.
For he, far-sighted, stout-willed pioneer,
So careful, planning, toiling, strong in all
That marks the man who listens to the call
Of Right and Duty, keeping vision clear,
Was but the first of a long line of men
That through the years have helped his cause so well,
Striving to serve their fellows worthily.
Such honors as they gained were past the ken
Of the wise founder. To their lot it fell
The work to finish — that he did foresee.*

—J. B. C.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IF the original Silas Peirce had had any idea of the task it would be one hundred years after he started in business to write an account of what has occurred during the "Century of Service" that he and his family have rendered to the business community and to the world, there is no doubt that he would have kept a record so that we should have been able to learn something of his early career without the great amount of work that has been entailed in gathering the few facts presented here. It is earnestly hoped that any one who has in mind the welfare of the historians of the business houses that start this year on a century run, will keep elaborate notes of their doings. In Mr. Peirce's day, however, quill pens that needed frequent sharpening were not conducive to ready writing. It even took longer to blot correspondence then, for instead of blotting paper the sand-box must be used, as witness many letters and bills preserved from those days on which the adhering sand still glistens.

In the preparation of this book, assistance has come from many and varied sources. A fact here, a date there, have helped to round out the story of an American grocery house, unique because this house has run for a hundred years under the founder's name, always having a member of his family of the same name in the concern. Mr. Walter K. Watkins, who has added much to our knowledge of Old Boston, has supplied many important

A CENTURY OF SERVICE

facts. The researches of Mr. Gaillard Hunt, chief of the Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress, have been the basis of the notes on men's fashions.

Mr. John B. Read, of William Read & Sons, loaned a picture of Market Square, reproduced here, which has excited the interest of antiquarians; the Bostonian Society searched carefully through hundreds of pictures for views of the Peirce stores and put its valuable library at our disposal; Mr. Charles E. Goodspeed, the bookseller, generously gave several of the rare prints reproduced, and members of the families of those formerly connected with the concern have done everything in their power to furnish the best pictures of relatives. The kindly spirit exhibited by all who were asked for data or pictures is worthy of note. So rarely is one solicited for anything that relates to a business that has reached the century mark, that the novelty of the request accounts for some of the interest shown.

J. B. CLAPP

Boston, April, 1915.



A CENTURY OF SERVICE



ILAS PEIRCE, the first of that name to make Boston his home, was born on the old farm homestead in the village of Egypt, in Scituate, Massachusetts, in the year 1793. This farm is now occupied by Silas Peirce, the third

of the name, who is of the ninth generation of ownership and president of Silas Peirce & Co. Ltd. Their ancestor was Captain Michael Peirce, the famous Indian fighter, who probably came to America some years prior to 1647, the year in which he settled in Scituate, and his descendants grew up on the farm. He was killed by the Indians in King Philip's War, but his name and fame spread beyond the confines of the colony and even in the distant parts of New England the savages knew of the intrepid fighter who had done so much to break their power in southeastern Massachusetts.

THE FOUNDER OF THE HOUSE

Silas Peirce received the ordinary country school education and grew up on the farm like other boys

of his time in New England, doing the chores about the place and assisting his father in the farm work. He also assisted, as far as a very young boy could, in the duties connected with the country tavern that his father kept. Though there were not many travellers in those days, this was the only inn for miles around, and doubtless the boy gained some idea of the world from the people who stopped there. A few years after young Silas left Egypt for Boston, the family moved across the road to the homestead that is still standing. In the wing of this house Silas's brother opened a country store, in which was a case for books that the neighbors would lend to each other. This social lending library, established in the early part of the last century, was one of the first in that section, and years afterward, when Silas Peirce, 2d, father of the present Silas Peirce, lost his wife, he gave as a memorial to his native town one of the most attractive libraries to be found in the State.

It is easy to believe that the first Silas Peirce had his imagination and his desire to see the world stimulated by the travellers' tales that he heard about the fireplace in his father's inn. These travellers doubtless gave him an idea of what was going on in the great world outside the little village, so when he was fifteen years old he left home and came to Boston to seek his fortune. He began work in a ship carpenter's shop, where for a fortnight he wielded his tools most industriously, but one day he dropped an adze on his foot and the slight acci-



Silas Penru

dent changed the entire course of his life and incidentally led to the founding of the present grocery business. He gave up the ship carpenter's place and found work in an importing house. Here he remained for some years, getting a good insight into the methods of the merchants and importers. In those days the importing houses were situated close to the wharves, and the young clerk visited many ships and became acquainted with the officers of vessels from all over the world.

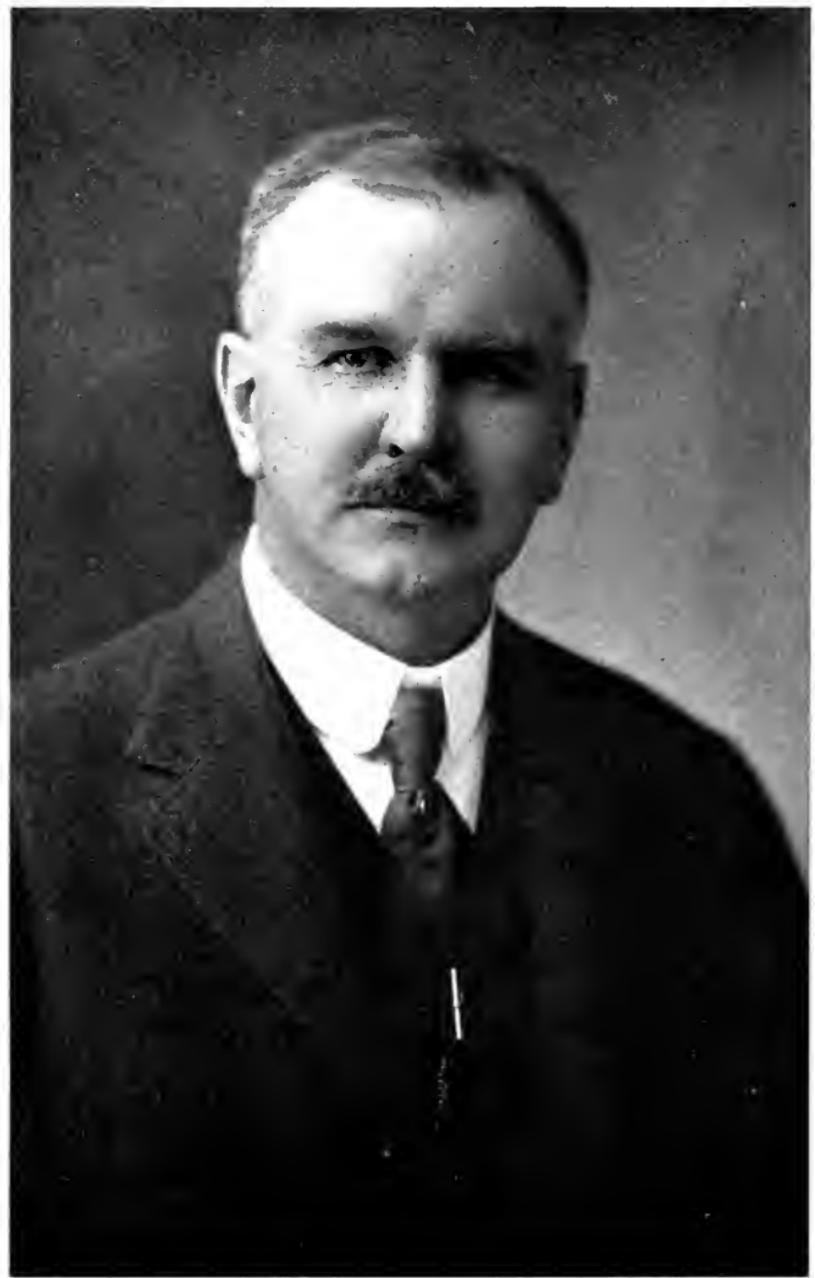
VOYAGE TO OPORTO

The firm with which he was connected had dealings with many foreign countries, and probably through its influence he went as supercargo on a vessel that sailed for Oporto, Portugal, in 1814. Oporto was then, as now, the most important seaport of the country after Lisbon. Only five years before his arrival it had been taken from the French by an Anglo-Portuguese force under Wellington,—that same great general who, only a few weeks after the supercargo started in business for himself overthrew Napoleon at Waterloo and made 1815 the most important year of modern times. The town, one of the dirtiest and most picturesque in Europe, its irregular outline accentuated by many towers, its whitewashed houses gleaming among trees and terraced gardens, must have presented a strong contrast in the young man's mind to the staid Puritanical Boston that he had left at the other end of his long voyage. No doubt on his return

trip he often contrasted mentally the filthy streets and the uncomfortable houses of the Portuguese city with the well-swept streets and neat dwellings of the Massachusetts town, and this voyage to foreign parts convinced him that Boston was the best place in the world for an American. At any rate, when he reached Boston he remained here and never left again as long as he lived.

BOSTON IN 1815

In 1814, on account of the large numbers of militia quartered in Boston, local trade in food-stuffs was brisk. On the thirteenth of February of the next year news of the conclusion of the war with England reached here and the town celebrated the signing of the Treaty of Ghent. Peace once assured, Boston continued to grow rapidly. The census of 1810 showed more than 33,000 inhabitants, and by 1815 this number was increased by at least 5000. Every one was doing his share to make the town a better place in which to live and do business, for every one was keenly alive to the necessity of increasing the importance of the town as a mercantile center. The last year of the war found the citizens preparing for a possible attack by the British, when two hundred grocers, as well as merchants and mechanics, lawyers and schoolmasters, Harvard students and clerks, took pick and shovel to complete fortifications that should withstand the enemy. Now that the hostilities were ended, picks and shovels



Silas Penick

were used for a different purpose, as the work of filling in the mill pond, bounded by what are now North and South Margin Streets, which had been interrupted by the war, proceeded rapidly and large numbers of laborers found employment.

The importation of goods from abroad had almost entirely ceased during the War of 1812, and the spring of 1815 saw a great revival of business in this direction. Besides, the resumption of trade with the West Indies was important. It had been customary before the war to ship fish, hoops and staves, and other distinctly New England products to the West Indies, where the vessels would reload with molasses, sugar and rum for England. Then they would return to New England with articles of British manufacture. All this business had been practically killed by the war and its resumption meant much to Boston and its merchants.

FOOD AND FASHIONS

An adequate picture of life in the town when the returned supercargo opened his store would fill many pages. The citizens were hard working and plain living, and while there was little poverty, the number of wealthy men was small, so that the grocer was not obliged to carry a large assortment of fancy groceries. Indeed, the mechanic or laboring man of today who earns from fifteen to twenty dollars a week has a greater variety of food on his table than the wealthy men of Mr. Peirce's early

days. There is one important fact in connection with Mr. Peirce's career that should be mentioned here. Years and years ago, before the "Pure Food" question had ever arisen, he used to say that he had always prided himself on selling pure goods, and that he thought the grocer who sold adulterated articles, while perhaps making larger profit on them than on better goods, would lose by such sales in the long run. He was always glad to think of himself as one of the pioneers of the pure food movement.

But if the people of Mr. Peirce's early days were living simply on plain food, they were also dressing in what seemed to certain old-fashioned Bostonians an extremely plain and radical fashion. For the past year or two the costumes for men had been in a transition state. Gorgeous coats and brocaded waistcoats, with silk knickerbockers and silver buckled shoes were now worn only by a few of the wealthy and conservative Bostonians, for it was in the Waterloo year that pantaloons had come into use in this country. These were worn by the younger men, although there was much variety in the costumes and at any gathering of note the dress of the younger generation was becoming strikingly plain. At such a gathering there would be seen square-skirted coats and others of a style just coming in vogue made of green or blue cloth with large gilt or pearl buttons, a high rolling collar and long narrow tails, reaching down to the calves. Starch had been introduced into the neckcloths of



IN A STORE IN THIS BUILDING SILAS PEIRCE BEGAN BUSINESS APRIL 1, 1815

the gentry of Europe and the fashion had reached America. Shirt collars were so high that they touched the wearer's ears. "Pudding cravats" were designed to make the chest look deep, and stocks were just coming into use. There were a few old men who still powdered their hair and a few dandies had theirs curled, but most men wore the hair long and parted on the side. In all these fashions the one that most affected the grocer was the introduction of the stiff neckcloth, which helped the sale of starch.

THE FIRST STORE

Young Peirce had the shrewd Yankee instinct for barter and trade, which had been sharpened by his years of service in the importing house and by his experience as supercargo. He lost no time after his return in looking about for a location in which to start in business for himself. Soon he found a building at 13 Dock Square, later numbered 21, which he thought suitable for the grocery business. The building is still standing and is occupied by several business concerns. It was owned by the town of Boston as late as 1795, and in that year was sold by auction to the highest bidder, the Rev. Isaac Story of Marblehead, a prominent clergyman of that town, for whom the Story School was named. The building in 1795 was described as of brick and wood, four stories high and covering eight hundred square feet. It was valued three years later at \$8000. In 1850 it was occupied by Johonnot & Saunders, hardware,

and later the next neighbor towards the market was George Fenno, famous as the originator of the advertising phrase, familiar to all Boston lads of a half century ago, "Clothe Your Boys at Fenno's." In time Fenno acquired the whole building.

At the sale of the property in 1795 the following notice was circulated:

AUCTION

AT 11 A.M. MONDAY 15 JUNE 1795

Three very valuable Brick Stores fronting Dock Square and adjoining the Market being the most advantageous stand for Business in the Town of Boston, now occupied by William Dawes, Jr., Austin & Crocker & Eliakim Morse; also row of bldgs improved as shops fronting Concert Hall.

In April, 1815, Mr. Peirce opened his store. He was then just past his majority and was far more active and alert than the average business man, for his experience at sea had done much to develop him.

IN THE MILITIA

When the country boy first came to Boston he was naturally much interested in seeing the soldiers when they marched in honor of some special event or escorted some dignitary to his hotel. On Artillery Election he followed the Ancients as they paraded, and it is not surprising to find that he soon joined the militia, and doubtless on his return from Portugal had an opportunity to train with his fellows before the



AN EARLY VIEW OF DOCK SQUARE, WHERE THE FIRST STORE WAS LOCATED
From the collection of Dr. Nathaniel B. Shurtleff in the possession of
the Bostonian Society.

announcement of the Treaty of Ghent, for Boston was full of militia at that time. After he had started in business he still attended to his military duties and in 1816 was made an ensign. Two years later he was promoted to be a lieutenant and in 1821 he became captain of the Seventh Company of the First Regiment, Colonel Thaddeus Page commanding. In 1823 he was changed to the Second Company, of which he remained captain for years. The First Regiment belonged to the Third Brigade of the First Division of the Massachusetts Militia. Meanwhile, in the year that he was made a captain, he joined the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, and began to take an interest in the affairs of that organization. To his friends and to many of his customers he was always "Captain Peirce," and letters that have been preserved show that it was the custom to address him as "Captain Silas Peirce, Merchant."

RETAIL PRICES IN 1815

The prices of groceries at the time that Mr. Peirce started in business were so different from those at present that a few figures may be of interest. At that time sugar, the brown Havana sugar that did not entirely disappear from the grocer's stock until after the Civil War, retailed at 14 cents a pound. Molasses was 80 cents per gallon at retail, Hyson tea \$1.40 a pound, rice $4\frac{1}{2}$ cents a pound, common salt 11 cents a quart, and malt \$1.50 a bushel. A few weeks after Mr. Peirce

had opened his first store in Dock Square a bill of groceries was sold by one of his retail neighbors amounting to \$9.31. This consisted largely of New England rum, the total amount of the groceries being less than one-half of the value of the rum, which was sold at \$1.10 per gallon. It is noteworthy that payment for these items was made largely in butter at 24 cents a pound and eggs at 20 cents per dozen. In making the settlement the wise Boston grocer took no chances of a mistake occurring in the bill, and instead of receipting it, simply marked it "errors excepted" and signed his name.

The great changes that a century has made in prices will be seen from the above, for it must be remembered that in 1815 the purchasing power of a dollar was probably from two to two and one-half times as great as at present. Molasses at what would be now two dollars per gallon is an advance on even the "war prices" that so many of the grocers of two-score years ago used to quote.

IN MARKET SQUARE

The young grocer remained in his first location for a year, and in 1816 moved to No. 6 Market Square, on the south side of Faneuil Hall. On November 16, 1819, this was described in a court document as "a Shop numbered six on the south side of the Market." This store was in a brick dwelling of three stories, which had just been sold by Nathaniel Noyes, an apothecary, who had kept



SECOND STORE OCCUPIED BY SILAS PEIRCE, MARKET SQUARE, 1816

Described in Early Records as "The Shop numbered six
on the south side of Market Square."

a shop there since the Revolution, to Captain William Thompson of Charlestown. On the east side of this house was Corn Court and on the west was Fitche's Alley, afterwards Flagg Alley, then Change Alley, and now Change Avenue. This passageway was originally named Pierce's Alley, in compliment to the captain of the *Mayflower*. The building covered a thousand feet of land space and was lighted by twenty-six windows, a large number for a building of that size at that time. According to the earliest picture extant, the front was clapboarded, but this was probably done after Mr. Peirce's day. Back of the store ran an extremely narrow passageway called Damnation Alley, through which one could go to the Hancock House, which was said to have sheltered Louis Philippe when that monarch was for a short time an exile here.

Afterwards the Peirce store was demolished to make room for a stone building that was occupied by the Reads, dealers in firearms, and it was here that the police boldly met the trouble makers during the draft riots in July, 1863, when thirty people were killed.

Some ten years later, in the upper attic of the Read store, the writer, in preparing for a mountain trip, found a knapsack that had been captured by Northern troops during the Civil War when the Confederates were trying to run the blockade at Charleston, S. C. Within recent years the stone store has given place to a brick building that is now leased by a firm of seed merchants.

WEST INDIA Goods

Mr. Peirce occupied store No. 6 as a "grocer." In the cellars were George Leland, provisions, and Elijah Bruce, "stall keeper." Evidently Mr. Bruce was a butcher, so that under one roof the thrifty citizens of the town could buy everything that was needed in the way of food. Later, when Mr. Peirce moved to Elm Street, it was as a dealer in "West India goods and groceries." Just what the distinction was between a grocer and a dealer in West India goods and groceries, even the most learned antiquarians who have studied the history of Boston are unable to state positively. It was about the time that Mr. Peirce started in business that grocers added "W. I. Goods" to their signs. In that year there were listed one hundred and ten dealers in "W. I. Goods" in the town of Boston, besides a large number who called themselves simply "grocers." As the latter class had stores in the residential district it is likely that at first the retail grocers did not designate themselves as dealers in West India goods.

THE FAMOUS BITE TAVERN

Few locations in the old town appeal more strongly to historians and antiquarians than the "Shop numbered six on the south side of the Market." A century before the Corn Market, "on Pierce's Alley," held in front of the site of the Peirce store, had brought trade to the



Yours truly
Fitzroy Kelly -

vicinity, and now with Boston's market business all done near the store, no wonder that the young grocer thought his new move beneficial and wise. Close by was the Bite Tavern, built in 1795, a three-story wooden house. During the first half of the nineteenth century this building was numbered 8 Market Square. At one time it was known as the "Bight of Leogan," which may have been its original name. Few of the names of old Boston landmarks have been more discussed than this. According to Webster a bight is "a bend in the sea-coast forming an open bay," and the suggestion has been made that the name came from the town of Leogane on the west coast of Hayti, which lies in the angle or bight of the Gulf of Leogane. Possibly some returned sea-captain suggested the name. Certain it is that in the thirties the boys at the Fort Hill School when studying geography were taught by Charles Fox, the master, that the peculiar shape of the lot on which the Bight Tavern stood was a good illustration of that portion of the sea called a "bight." The teacher was a very old man and insisted that the name of the tavern was originally Bight, but was gradually changed to Bite, as the latter related more to its use than its form.

In the picture of the second Peirce store, taken probably in the late fifties, the word "Bite" is conspicuous on the tavern signs. The house was a favorite resort for the merchants and marketmen who wanted their drinks regularly at eleven in the morning and four in the afternoon, and was noted

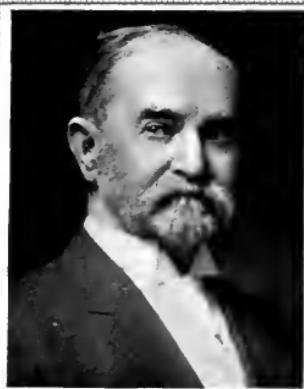
for the excellence of its table as well as the quality of its liquors. Famous as the resort of checker players, the visitor could usually find some enthusiasts having a quiet game at almost any hour of the day or evening.

HORATIO HARRIS AND THE "BITE"

There is a story that may be apocryphal but is apropos, because each of the three Peirces was a friend of Horatio Harris, the auctioneer, of whom it is told. Mr. Harris was known to thousands of Bostonians and his auction sales were always lively, for he was quick-witted and bidders rarely got the better of him. He was once auctioning the tickets for a Jenny Lind concert and the bids kept the prices at good figures. "Sold to the Tremont House," "Sold to the American House," he would say when accepting bids for the guests of the hotels. At last five tickets were run up to a price so high that the bidder hesitated to take the seats. "Whose bid?" asked the auctioneer, but there was no response. "What name?" again queried Mr. Harris, after a pause, and this time came the answer, much to the amusement of the crowd, "Bite Tavern."

PARTNERS AND CHANGES

In 1818, Mr. Peirce took as a partner William Thompson, Jr., son of the owner of the building in which the store was situated. Two years later



Thomas L. Perkins

*Managing
Directors*



Amos T. Leavitt



Herbert L. Kelley



F. Loring Wheeler



John B. Clapp
Treasurer

they had another partner, William Borrow, who remained with them for one year. In the fall of 1822 Mr. Peirce removed to No. 2, Sears Buildings, Elm Street, a store in a block built by David Sears, where he continued the business alone. Mr. Thompson kept on in business in Market Square for a decade longer.

On November 18, 1822, the *Boston Commercial Gazette* published the following advertisement:

SILAS PEIRCE

Has taken Store No. 21, (sic) Sears Buildings, Elm Street, where he offers for sale, a good assortment of SUPERIOR GROCERIES, and respectfully solicits the patronage of his friends and the public.

4 wis

Nov. 18

The movement of his business northward was really the result of good judgment on the part of the young grocer. Some of the leading merchants were interested in developing Boston towards the north, and Mr. Peirce, learning of their plan, determined to take advantage of this growth. In 1817, David Sears and other progressive Bostonians had cut through and laid out Market Street, now known as Cornhill. Later some of these men had become interested in the City Market on Brattle Street, a building that ran through to Elm Street. Years afterwards the building was occupied by the Allen Furniture Company. It was to a store next to this City Market that Mr. Peirce moved. The projectors of

the new market felt sure that it would become the “great market” of the young city; but for some reason the authorities discouraged the project, with the result that the large Faneuil Hall Market, popularly known as Quincy Market, was built in 1826 and the City Market building taken for other purposes.

The grocer, however, had made a good move, as there had been changes in the neighborhood which made the location desirable. David Sears, owner of the block in which the store was located, owned also a large number of buildings in the vicinity, many of which were leased for long terms of years. Later Mr. Sears's real estate holdings became the basis of the organized “Fifty Associates” from whom the firm hired the Elm Street store.

ELM STREET STORE

The new grocery store was of brick and was occupied at first only in part by Mr. Peirce, the upper portion of the building being used as a hotel. The innholders who kept the house were constantly changing. It was on the south side of the street next to an eight-foot passageway running along the east side of the City Market. Almost opposite was Wildes' Hotel, one of the most popular places in the city for the country folk to visit. The hotel did a large business in stabling the horses of the country merchants who drove to Boston, sometimes in their carriages, but more often in their large canvas-covered wagons, in which



IN THE WHITE FRONT BUILDING WAS LOCATED THE THIRD STORE OCCUPIED BY SILAS PEIRCE & CO., ELM STREET, 1822

they transported the goods bought here back to the villages of New England.

Across the street stood the house in which Edward L. Davenport, the famous actor, father of Fanny Davenport, was born in 1815. This house, as well as a part of the Peirce store annex, was torn down on the widening of Washington Street.

In 1846 Mr. Peirce enlarged his quarters by hiring the building on the east of his store that was owned by the heirs of Samuel Torrey. The store was then numbered 22 and 25 Elm Street. In 1854, 22 and 25 Elm Street became 49 and 51. In those days the city fathers, not having a large amount of business on their hands, were continually changing the names and the numbers of the different streets, which was annoying, but was comparatively harmless, considering the mischief that they might have done.

Three or four years after he began business, Mr. Peirce had married Hannah Lopez, a school mistress living on Charter Street. The couple first lived at No. 5 Portland Place on the north side of Portland Street, between Hanover and Sudbury. The place is now built over. In 1825 they had moved to Derne Street, then becoming quite a fashionable residential section. Hannah Lopez was the daughter of John and Hannah (Tuckerman) Lopez and was connected with that Lopez family whose fame as merchants had spread to every port in Europe. She was born in Boston in 1793, and died here at the great age of ninety-two.

WILDES'

When Mr. Peirce kept in Dock Square and in Market Square he was on historic ground. There was no more important section of Old Boston than that which lies around Faneuil Hall, for the corn market, the town dock, the early buildings, some of them dating back to within a few decades of the landing of the Pilgrims, all combined to make that part of the town interesting to those who a century ago could see some of these historic places and hear the traditions about those which had passed away. One building, the "Old Feather Store," built in 1680, was not torn down until 1860. It is to be regretted that better records were not kept of these surroundings, for their full history would show the large place that they held in the story of Boston.

Elm Street was famous for its hotels, one of the most famous being Wildes', nearly opposite the Peirce store. Next to Wildes' at 9 Elm Street was Jacob Barnard's stage office, from which many stages started. In the last years of the eighteenth century Patterson's House became a tavern and stage house at 11 Elm Street, and in 1826 it was taken by Solomon Wildes. By the middle of the last century it had passed into the hands of Moses Wildes, and old Bostonians are still living who remember that innkeeper. All through the first half of the last century this tavern was the starting place for various stage lines and it was one of the places where books were kept for passengers who desired the stages to call for them. In 1828 the stage



FANEUIL HALL AND FEATHER STORE, 1838

for Haverhill, Exeter, Dover and Portland left there every week day at 7.30 A.M., arriving at Portland at four o'clock in the afternoon of the next day.

STAGE COACH DAYS

The Dorchester and Milton stage left Wildes' at four P.M. daily. It went through Roxbury and Dorchester, a distance of seven miles, the fare being thirty-seven and a half cents. The Boston and Lowell stage left the same tavern at three o'clock in the afternoon by way of Charlestown, Medford, Woburn and Billerica. The distance was twenty-six miles and the fare was one dollar and a quarter.

On Monday, Wednesday and Saturday a stage left Wildes' at 3.30 P.M. for Newton Upper Falls, Dover and Medway. On Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday a stage left for Uxbridge at noon, running through Brighton, Newton, Natick, Holliston and Milford, the fare being two dollars. There were two lines of stages running to Weymouth on week days at three and four o'clock in the afternoon for a sixty-two and one-half cent fare. A daily stage for Watertown and Waltham left at four P.M., the fare being thirty-seven and one-half cents to the former place and fifty cents to the latter. These prices seem high considering the value of money at that time and the present low rates. For long distances horses were changed every ten or fifteen miles and travellers were obliged to be early risers, as they often had to put in long days on the road.

Other figures regarding stage coach travelling of that time are interesting. The Albany mail stage left Boyden's, No. 1 Dock Square, at three o'clock in the morning on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays for the New York Capital. Springfield was the principal stopping place on the road. After crossing the Connecticut River the stage went on to Ely's, stops being made on the road at Emerson's Tavern in Westfield; at Knox's in Blandford; at Rowley's or Emerson's in Greenwood; at Chadwick's in Tyringham; at Root's in Great Barrington; and at Hicks's in Egremont. From this inn ran also the Plymouth and Sandwich stage, the trip to the latter place taking exactly twelve hours. This stage left Boston on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, returning on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Another tavern on Elm Street was Bradley's, from which the stage ran to Amherst, N. H., and Windsor, Vt., carrying the mail. This stage left on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays, usually reaching Windsor at four P.M. on the day following. Passengers on the Saturday stage spent Sunday at some point on the road. From Windsor, another stage ran to Burlington, Vt. As the journey between these points could be made in fifty-six hours under favorable circumstances, it is easy to figure that the traveller who started on Saturday took the better part of a week in making a journey of less than two hundred and fifty miles.

Bradley's Tavern also was the starting point of the stage for Hanover, N. H., which went by way of

Andover and Haverhill and through Concord, N. H. This stage started at five o'clock in the morning and sometimes reached Concord, N. H., in twelve hours. Twice each week this stage went from Concord to Hanover, the trip between these places taking eleven hours.

Hanover 14 Apr. 1834

My dear Sirs
I send you
by Mr. Emery the Coachman the following articles

One Hhd. Molasses —
1 Bag Bros. Savannah Sugar
1 Dbl. Coffe — —
1 Dozen Saffron — —
1 Bag Oranges —

We are in want of the above articles before
I shall be down my self and send to you
for them with the expectation that they will
be as good and at as low prices as though
I selected them myself. Please send a bill
and place the same to account of.

*Dear Old Servants
Emerson & Brown*

Often the dealers sent their own wagons over
the stage route and it is a conservative estimate
that the trip took usually twice as long as by
coach. The letter from Hanover, N. H., repro-
duced here, is interesting as it indicates the method

of transportation four-score years ago, and also is eloquent testimony to the confidence that the customers had in the house, a confidence that succeeding generations have continued to express.

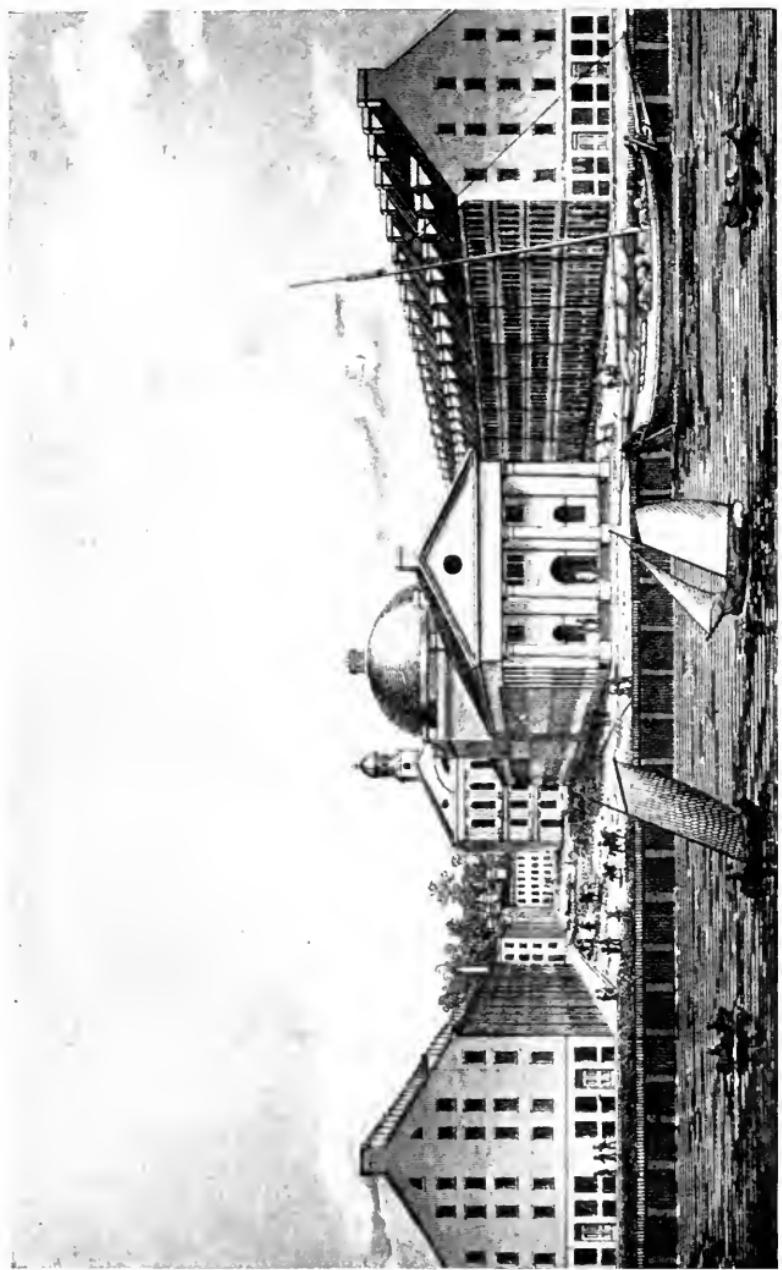


10

A handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature reads "Silas Pierce" on the top line, "Merchant" on the middle line, and "Boston" on the bottom line.

MAIL CHARGES

Six hours was the time of the Newburyport stage in its daily trips (Sundays excepted) to and from Boston. The Newburyport stage started from Hale's Inn in Ann Street, now North Street, every week day at noon. The regular eastern mail also left from this inn every morning at ten o'clock. It was due at Salem in two hours, reached Newburyport at half past three, and at half past six was in Portsmouth, N. H. Half an hour later the stage went on to Kennebunk, reaching there at midnight, then leaving for Portland, and if conditions were favorable, arriving there at half past eight the next morning.

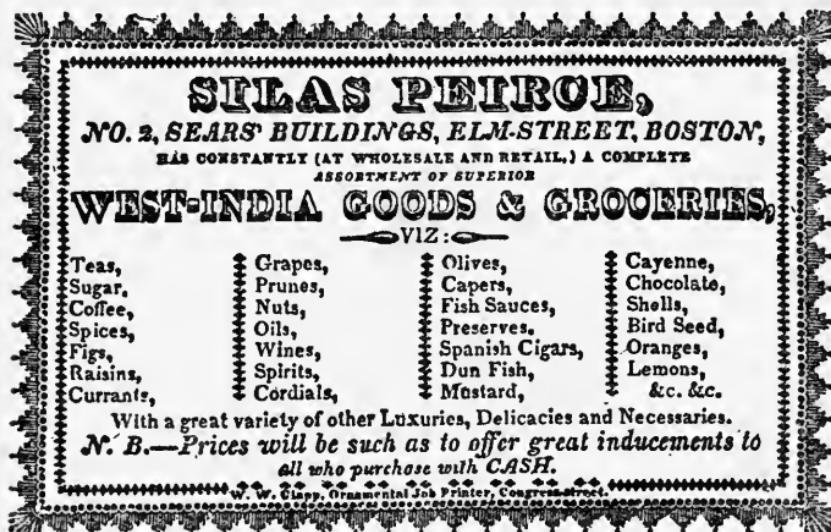


EAST VIEW OF FANEUIL HALL MARKET, 1835

The mention of the Newburyport stage is a reminder of the address of a letter reproduced here that was brought by one of these coaches in 1824. In those days the charge for carrying a letter of one sheet was eight cents for forty miles, ten cents for ninety miles, twelve and one-half cents for one hundred and fifty miles, and twenty cents for five hundred miles. Any letter weighing an ounce was counted as four single letters. It must be remembered that there were no envelopes in those days, the sheets being folded and sealed and the address written on the outside. Magazines and pamphlets were carried to distances of over one hundred miles for two cents per sheet, the minimum charge for the distance under fifty miles being half that amount.

FIRST BUSINESS CARD

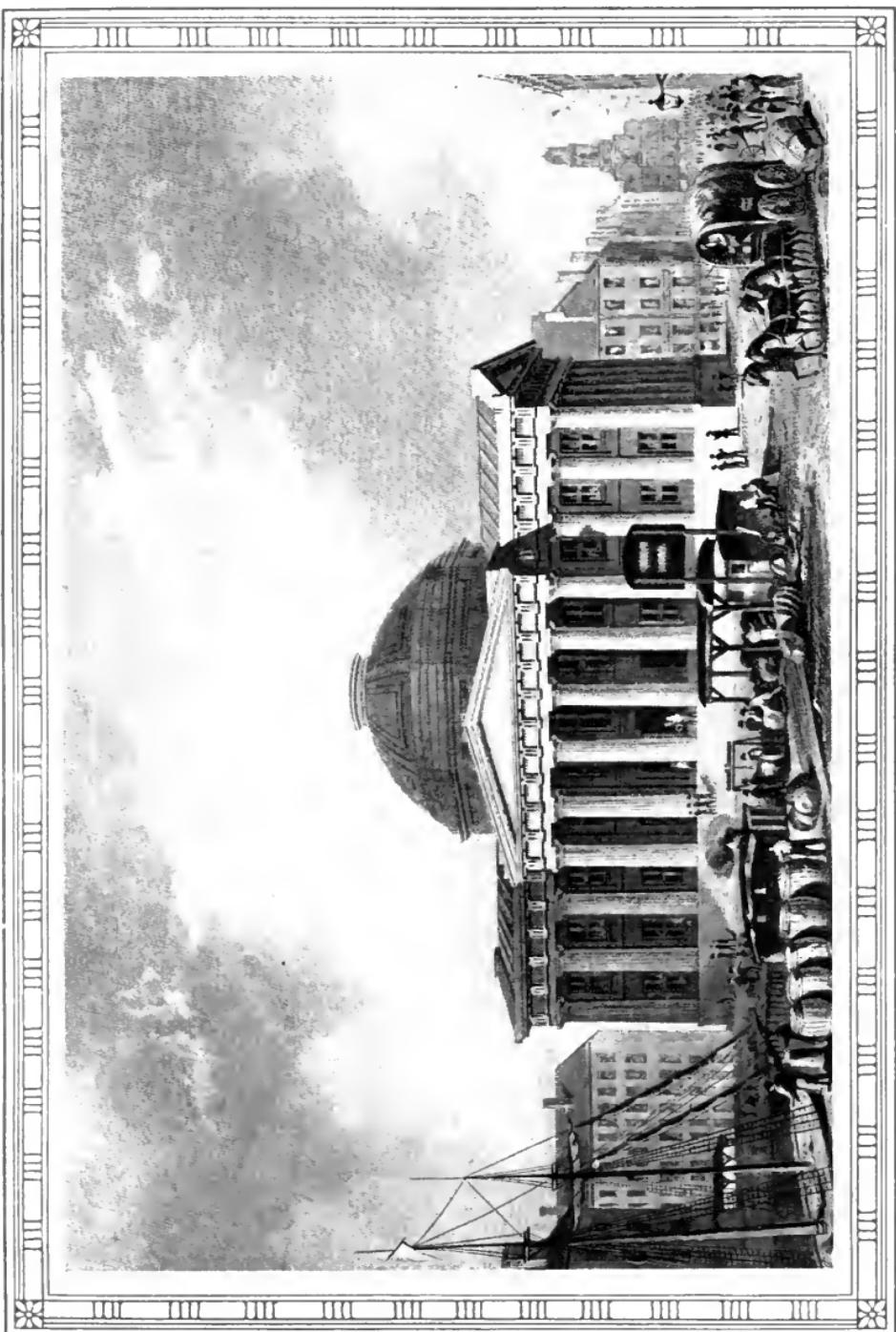
Some thirty years ago Mr. C. C. Howland, a customer who had a store on Shawmut Avenue, Boston, went to Dover, N. H., to settle the affairs of his uncle, E. C. Andrews, who had just died. Among the papers left by Mr. Andrews was a card which he had received from the first Silas Peirce in 1828. The card was probably printed in 1822. At the time that the firm celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary fac-similes of the card, on the same style of brown pasteboard that was used in the original, were distributed among the customers. These fac-similes were sent to various parts of the country, and one day the



postman brought a letter directed to "Silas Peirce, No. 2, Sears Buildings, Elm Street, Boston." The writer of the letter said that he had seen the card and noticed that "prices will be such as to offer great inducements to all who purchase with cash," and as he wished to pay cash he asked what inducements would be offered.

AN EARLY ADVERTISEMENT

Early in the last century it was not customary for grocers to advertise their goods unless they had some specialty that could not be found elsewhere in town. The importers were more liberal in announcing their wares, and if a vessel arrived with spices or teas the fact was advertised in the newspapers. One of the first advertisements of the founder of the house that has been discovered was in



CUSTOM HOUSE, 1856

the *Columbian Centinel* of January 10, 1824, and reads as follows:

ESSENCE OF ROSES

J. P. HALL, No. 1 Union Street and SILAS PEIRCE, Elm Street, Boston, keep constantly for sale — Gould's real ESSENCE OF ROSES. One bottle will make from 6 to 10 of Rose Water. Price 50 cents per bottle. Ask for Gould's real Essence of Roses.

6 Dec. 1823, 6 m.

THE FIRST "DRUMMER"

WILLIAM STEARNS, a grocer who later established the present firm of William Stearns & Co., was taken into partnership by Mr. Peirce in 1826, and six years afterwards withdrew to go into business for himself, at first as the head of the firm of Stearns & Crosby. He was a fine representative of the business man who used to be called "a merchant of the old school." Born in Lunenburg, Mass., he came to Boston when quite young. Mr. Peirce, an excellent judge of human nature, saw that the youth had good business ability and was just the partner needed to help carry on the business. Mr. Stearns opened a store on Chatham Street, Boston, and in a few years took as a partner James Dana Hutchinson, who was in this store for over three-score years. The business thus established has been carried on in the same building for eighty-one years.

In a sales book dated 1829, there are numerous notes regarding the business. From this it is

learned that Mr. Stearns went to New Bedford, Lowell, Salem and Portsmouth frequently. He evidently acted as a travelling salesman, although the custom of sending out men to sell goods did not become common until many years later.

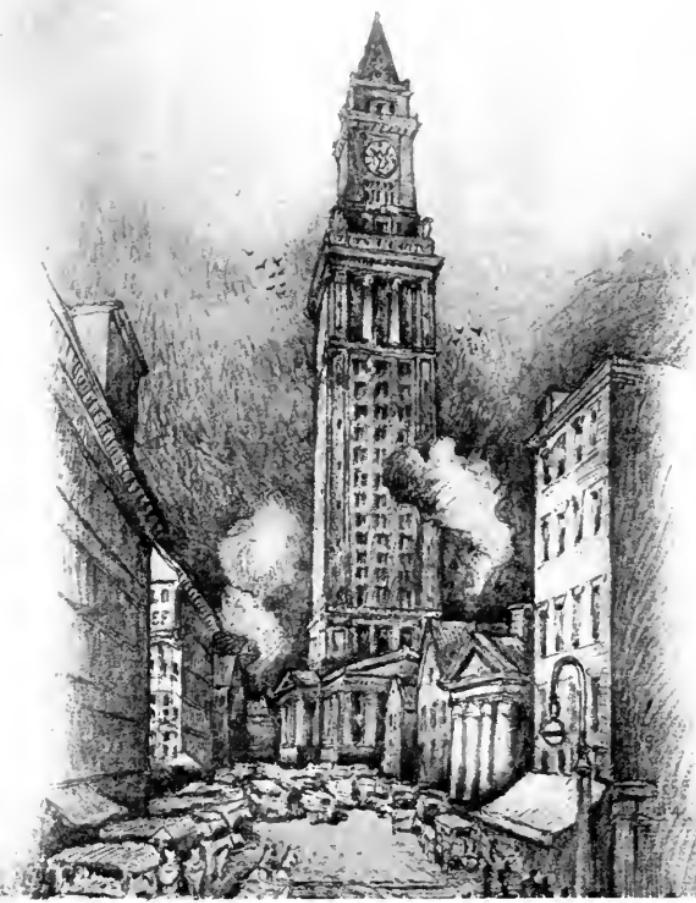
THE NEW PARTNERS

After Mr. Stearns had withdrawn, Mr. Peirce remained alone until he took as partners Hayward Peirce Cushing, a relative, and Thomas Hall. In searching the files of the newspapers that were published during the early years of Mr. Peirce's business career, no mention of his partners has been found until Mr. Hall and Mr. Cushing went into the firm. On Saturday morning, October 12, 1833, the *Independent Chronicle and Boston Patriot* published the following:

COPARTNERSHIP NOTICE

Silas Peirce has taken into copartnership Mr. HAYWARD P. CUSHING and Mr. THOMAS HALL, and the business will hereafter be conducted under the firm of SILAS PEIRCE & CO.
Oct. 8, 1833.

HAYWARD PEIRCE CUSHING, son of Nathaniel Cushing, Jr., and Jane Peirce Cushing, was born in Scituate on May 3, 1812. Coming to Boston he entered the employ of Silas Peirce in 1826 and in 1833 was admitted, with Thomas Hall, to the firm. Mr. Cushing was a man of strong and decided character and did much to make the firm successful, for at the time he was taken as a partner Mr.



CUSTOM HOUSE, 1915

Peirce was alone and the increase in business made it necessary for some new blood to be infused into the concern.

Mr. Cushing was quick and correct in his judgments. In purchasing goods he made up his mind at once whether or not he wished them and it was rare that his decision failed to be right. A director in several railroads, he was especially interested in the Metropolitan Street Railroad, with which he was connected for a long term, serving it in various official capacities. He was a patriotic man and believed in the Union, showing steadfast loyalty and a willingness to do everything in his power to uphold the government during the darkest hours of the Civil War. At one time he made a large purchase of an issue of government bonds that was not being taken up as rapidly as the authorities at Washington had hoped. He had put so much money into these bonds that it led to some conversation with his business associates when he remarked, in effect, "If these bonds are not worth anything, then there is nothing that we have that is worth anything."

He died October 13, 1870. One of his five children is a successful physician and another a well-known lawyer in Boston, where they have practiced for many years.

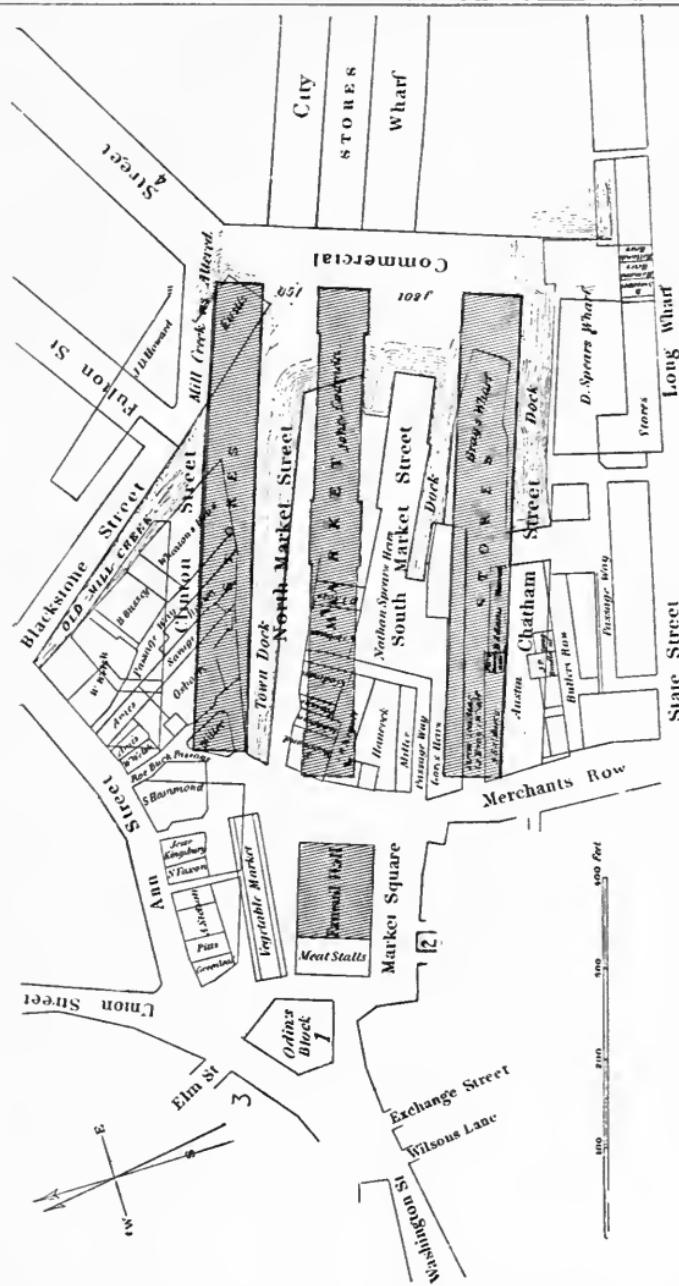
THOMAS HALL, who was admitted to the firm with Mr. H. P. Cushing, was born on September 2, 1812, at Leominster, Mass., the son of Gershom

Hall and his wife Barbara Gershom. The name Thomas went back in the family for several generations, and it was afterwards borne by Mr. Hall's son and grandson. Mr. Hall was a very dignified and precise merchant of the old school, who remained in the firm until 1857, dying at Lynn in 1879.

It is hard at this distance of years to do justice to the business acumen and ability of the early partners of the house. In the case of Mr. Hall his contemporaries have all passed away and there are few anecdotes or incidents of his life that have come down to the present time. Fortunately among other records is a letter that he wrote from New York on November 19, 1850, when he went there to examine a cargo of raisins that had arrived from Spain in a damaged condition. These raisins were needed by the firm for the Thanksgiving trade and the letter that Mr. Hall sent back regarding them and the work that he did with the custom house authorities and the insurance adjusters give an insight into his methods of business. The firm had in him a man who could grasp the details of a transaction and the letter proves that he was equal to any task that might be given him in connection with his business.

A FARMER'S SON

SILAS PEIRCE, 2d, the son of a farmer, born on the Peirce farm in Egypt, decided on a mercantile career when eighteen years of age and in 1845 came to Boston and entered his uncle's store.



MAP SHOWING RECLAMATION DUE TO CONSTRUCTION OF FANEUIL HALL MARKET IN 1826

LOCATIONS OF PEIRCE'S STORES ARE SHOWN BY FIGURES 1, 2, 3 AND 4

He commenced on a salary of fifty dollars per annum, his father furnishing board and clothing the first year. Beginning at the bottom of the ladder, he mastered the details of the business, and showed marked ability as a buyer. He became a partner in 1857, and was at the head of the firm at the time of his death, October 15, 1898. For the last ten years of his life he was not actively engaged in the grocery business, but devoted his time to the Boston National Bank, of which he was the president; the North American Insurance Company, which he served in the same capacity, and various other corporations of which he was a director. He was connected with many charitable and philanthropic enterprises, officiating as president or treasurer of several benevolent organizations. An active participant in the affairs of the Methodist Episcopal Church, he served on important committees at conventions of that body and his advice in business affairs was often sought by his colleagues.

In all his religious and philanthropic work he was ably assisted by his wife, a woman of remarkable executive ability, who did everything possible to make her husband's plans successful. For years the Boston Young Women's Christian Association owed a great part of its success to her energetic and untiring work, and after her death her place was taken by her daughter, Mrs. Edward H. Nichols, whose husband became a member of the firm, who continued to serve the

Association with the same constant faithfulness that her mother had done.

COPPERS AND SOAP

One anecdote of Mr. Peirce has been told with embellishments for many years, but it happened exactly as related here and is now repeated for the benefit of coming grocers. Shortly after the Civil War, the soap manufacturer, B. T. Babbitt, established a quantity price on his soap. One hundred boxes could be bought for so much, two hundred for a trifle less per box, and so on up to one thousand. One thousand was the maximum number of boxes at the minimum price. The salesman from Babbitt's came to Mr. Peirce, and, anxious to make a large sale, tried to induce him to purchase a thousand boxes. Ever ready for a trade, the latter told the salesman that he would buy more than a thousand boxes if the right price could be named. After some talk, an offer was finally made for twelve hundred boxes of the soap, to be paid for largely in coppers, the exact amount of these not being designated. The salesman submitted the offer to New York and was told to accept it. The result was that the firm received the large invoice of soap and under Mr. Peirce's directions the clerks bought up at a discount all the coppers that could be obtained from the bakers, confectioners and other dealers who were known to have such money on hand. A small proportion of the bill was paid

by check, and the heavy coins, packed in nail kegs and in soap boxes securely strapped, were shipped by freight to New York City. It is a matter of record that the salesman never again approached Mr. Peirce with the intention of making a large sale.

ONE STREET AND ANOTHER

A short record of the places where the early partners lived from time to time will give some idea of the widespread changes in our city. Mention has already been made of Mr. Peirce's residence in Derne Street. In 1825 he lived at No. 4, a building now used for tenements. Five years later he moved to 45 Bowdoin Street and a decade after that was at 3 Montgomery Place, now Bosworth Street. Early in the fifties he built a large house at 3 Somerset Street and resided there until his death. This house, which is now given over to offices and stores, is, with its high stories and long flights of stairs, of a far different type from modern dwellings. But it was erected "on honor" and the workmanship was such that the building will last into the next century unless the march of improvement changes still more the section in which it stands.

Mr. Stearns lived on Belknap Street in 1832, and two years later Mr. H. P. Cushing was living at 101 Washington Street. Some twenty years afterwards he moved to a house numbered 620 Washington Street, almost opposite Common

Street, and in the same block with Charles Sprague, the banker-poet. At one time Thomas Hall lived on Wendell Street, later moving to Kingston Street. Silas Peirce, 2d, boarded for a time at the Merchants' Exchange Hotel on State Street, over the Merchants' Exchange and Post Office, on the site of the present Exchange Building. Later he lived on Summer Street not far from the residence of Daniel Webster, where the present Silas Peirce was born, and then moved to Franklin Street. When Silas Peirce, 3d, was a very small boy the family went to live in Montgomery Place, near the house of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and the little lad often saw the genial Autocrat as the latter came and went on his daily duties.

COMMERCIAL STREET

Meanwhile the Elm Street store, even with the additional building, was becoming too small for the growing business, and Mr. Peirce, looking for larger quarters, decided that he would continue at the North End, as near the market as possible, for the dealers in groceries and provisions would naturally cluster about Boston's famous market house. In May, 1855, Silas Peirce & Co. completed the purchase of a lot of the Mercantile Wharf Association, although, curiously enough, the contracts for building were signed in April, and during the summer the large block of stone stores on Commercial Street, extending from Clinton to Rich-



PRESENT LOCATION, 59-61 COMMERCIAL STREET, BOSTON

mond Streets, was erected, the Peirce store being numbered 59 and 61. A year later the grocers occupied a part of the new building and not long afterwards the entire store was given up to their use. From that day until the present the headquarters of the concern have been at 59 and 61 Commercial Street.

Commercial Street sixty years ago was far different from what it is now. The west side of the street was occupied by buildings that had been erected some years before. The Mercantile Block was built on made land and a narrow street, now called Mercantile, separated the stores from the waters of the harbor. Captains of the coasters ran their vessels so close to the street that often the bowsprits projected nearly to the back door of the Peirce store. Later this space in the rear of the block was filled in with earth from Fort Hill, and the land lay idle for years. The firm hired the newly made land directly back of the store and built a fence around it. In this enclosure molasses could be kept excepting during the hottest of the summer months.

THE "DUMP"

The "dump," as it was called, was a popular place for the firm's customers to visit, as a buyer who wished to lay in his year's stock of molasses had only to step across the street to find himself in a large yard, with the hogsheads and tierces and barrels arranged neatly in tiers, so that he

could make his selection with little trouble. Afterwards the "dump" became too valuable a piece of Boston real estate to be used for the storage of molasses. The farmers wanted some open place in which to dispose of their produce and for a time the land was used for a farmers' market. The idea of an open air market even a few rods away from the great market, was combated by many of the raisers of produce who drove in with their own teams and wished to establish themselves next Faneuil Hall Market itself. In the end, the farmers and others who came to sell their wares from their wagons were established on South Market Street and the "dump" was built over, so that what was a part of Boston Harbor three-score years ago, is now covered with an extensive meat market. Near by is the produce district of the city, with the buildings in which dealers in potatoes and other vegetables house their wares. The land on which the store stands is becoming as solid as the street in front of the building, but for many years the cellar was always overflowed at the highest tides. Only the heroic treatment of emptying eight hundred loads of dirt and gravel into the cellar at one time made it watertight.

DEATH OF SILAS PEIRCE, 1ST

Silas Peirce, 1st, died at his residence, 3 Somerset Street, at six o'clock on Wednesday evening, August 27, 1879, at the advanced age of eighty-

six years and six months. Few men rise by their own efforts from the small beginnings which marked his entrance into business life to such places of prominence in the community. He had inborn the Yankee characteristics of thrift, shrewdness and good common-sense. For years he declined public office, but in 1857 he consented to run for alderman and was elected, serving the city of Boston in that capacity for six years, during one of which he acted as Chairman of the Board. One of his associates among the aldermen said that Mr. Peirce was known as the "Watch Dog of the Treasury" and that no schemes to use the public money extravagantly were ever successful while he was on the Board. It was during his term of service that many plans were made for improving the North End, but the Civil War changed all these and improvements that had been contemplated for years were at last given up on account of conditions caused by the strife.

Mr. Peirce's municipal services were characterized by the sound judgment, independence and tact that had made his career as a merchant successful. At the time of his death he had been retired for years and many of his former business associates had passed away. Yet he was pleasantly remembered by those who were left and one of them told the story, that was later corroborated, of a meeting of the directors of an insurance company after the great fire in this

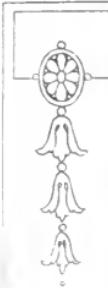
city. Mr. Peirce was one of these directors, and the question arose as to what should be done with the stock of the company. It looked as if the stock would be entirely wiped out unless some move were made for the benefit of the smaller stockholders. Mr. Peirce offered at once to give up his holdings, amounting to more than fifty thousand dollars, and by so doing something might be saved for the small shareholders. The idea staggered the other directors and the move was not carried out, but as the narrator of the story states, the aged grocer offered to give up fifty thousand dollars as readily as if it had been fifty cents.

OTHER PARTNERS

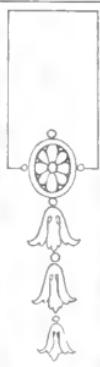
A lad from New York that found work with the firm was CHARLES E. MOODY, who after some years, in 1857, was admitted to partnership. He was much interested in shipping, and at one time owned shares in many vessels. In 1868 he established the successful firm of Charles E. Moody & Company. Associated with him in business were a number of his relatives, and at the present time, Charles H. Goodridge, a grand-nephew, is in the firm.

Mr. Moody died in Detroit, Mich., in 1893. He had been at the World's Fair in Chicago and was taken ill, dying while on his way home.

It was in May, 1840, that J. HAMILTON FARRAR entered the employ of the firm. At the age of four-



William Stearns
1826-1832



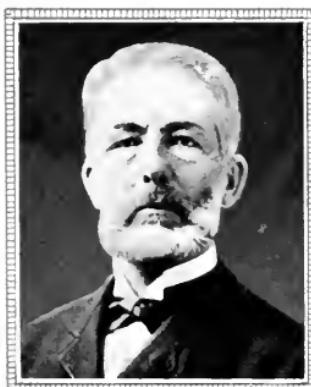
Thomas Hall
1833-1857



Hayward P. Cushing
1833-1863



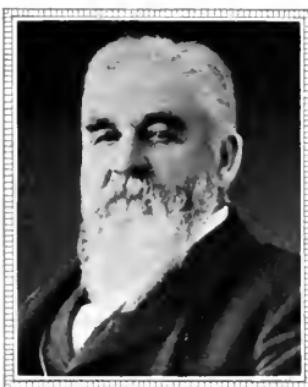
Nathan Cushing
1863-1871



Charles E. Moody
1857-1868



J. Hamilton Farrar
1863-1876



A. Moreton Swallow
1871-1890



Edward H. Nichols
1876-1900

Former Partners

teen he had gone to work for Lemuel A. Cooledge, the grandfather of F. Loring Wheeler of the present concern. Mr. Cooledge kept one of the principal retail grocery stores in Boston, situated on the corner of Essex and Washington Streets, where Bacon's store now stands. Mr. Farrar remained with Mr. Cooledge until he had become thoroughly acquainted with the retail business, for his employer had promised that in time he would get the lad a position in a wholesale grocery. Six years later the young man began his career as a wholesaler with the Peirce firm on Elm Street. In 1863 he was admitted to partnership, retiring after thirteen years. His death removed the last partner who had been connected with the first Silas Peirce.

Mr. Farrar was a director in a number of railroad companies and was actively interested in several philanthropies, serving for many years as the treasurer of the North End Mission. He was born on the last day of the year 1820 and died on February 17, 1906.

AN OLD-TIME GROCER

Mr. H. P. CUSHING's brother NATHAN, his junior by two years, was a grocer on Commercial Street almost opposite the Peirce store, where for years he had been at the head of the firm of Cushing & Clapp. This concern did a large business with Maine and with the British provinces, especially with Prince Edward Island, sending annually to that island goods worth thousands and thou-

sands of dollars. It was noted that after the introduction of railroads they were of little use to Mr. Nathan Cushing, as he shipped nearly all the goods he sold by schooners. This concern, which had been dealing extensively with Silas Peirce & Co. for years, was dissolved and in 1863 Mr. Cushing became the head of the older house, retiring eight years later. He was a man of marked characteristics, well informed on a great variety of subjects and an omnivorous reader, especially of works of natural science and history. Many of the younger men in the store stood in awe of him, but as a boy, I was brought by a fortunate chance to his notice, so that we became friends in spite of the great difference in years. The chance that brought us together was this: One day Mr. Cushing was arguing with a visitor and to enforce his argument wished to quote from Edmund Burke. He had Burke's idea but could not think of the exact words. Turning around, he said, "Young man, you ought to know what Burke said on that occasion. Don't you remember his words?"

Memories of numerous school recitations brought back Burke's speech and the retired merchant was greatly pleased, as the exact quotation fitted what he wished to say. Sometime later it developed that Mr. Cushing was well read in the works of Emerson, Theodore Parker and Oliver Wendell Holmes, three writers who were favorites of the boy who had furnished the Burke quotation.



ROBERT B. HATCH



GEORGE A. GLEASON



F. LOWELL DAVIS, JR.



GEORGE E. PRATT



WILLIAM H. ECKERT



S.P. MOORHOUSE



HENRY J. WILSON



CHARLES W. TUCKER

Indeed, while Mr. Cushing was reading "Over the Teacups" in the *Atlantic Monthly* he often spoke of them and recommended them as good reading.

REMINISCENCES OF NATHAN CUSHING

Mr. Cushing read the *Boston Advertiser* from beginning to end every morning, and at night studied the *Transcript*. One year there was a bill before the legislature to which he was strongly opposed, and he requested me to send letters to the *Advertiser* and *Transcript* against the bill. This was not at all agreeable as the bill seemed a desirable one, but Mr. Cushing, in his authoritative way, said: "Young man, a good lawyer can always see both sides of a case." The result was that for the next few weeks every point that could be found against the bill was diligently studied and letters sent to the *Advertiser* and *Transcript* which, much to Mr. Cushing's delight, contained arguments that were never refuted. He was a man of few words and little was said about the matter until nearly a year after my marriage. Then Mr. Cushing, pulling a good-sized bill out of his pocket, said: "I have always intended to make you a wedding present, for I have not forgotten how hard you argued against your convictions on that legislative bill. Probably you will want to buy some books. Get what you want."

THE FAMILY CIRCLE

While Mr. Cushing in his later years was not a theatre-goer, he had formerly taken an interest in plays and players and was well read in Shakespeare. At one time he boarded at the New England House, a noted hostelry, still standing, which was patronized by city as well as country merchants. There he made the acquaintance of Walter M. Leman, a cultured, educated actor, who later went to California, was made the judge of a local court and was much in demand as orator and poet for special occasions. Mr. Leman would return from the theatre after the performance and sit with Mr. Cushing discussing Shakespeare's plays until the small hours of the morning, for the merchant was never one who retired early.

When the present Boston Theatre was opened, it was intended as an attraction for the buyers from the south and west who visited the city, and Mr. Cushing, believing that the new house might aid in Boston's commercial development, invited one of his customers to go with him to this theatre a few days after it had been dedicated. The nomenclature of the various sections of the house was new to theatre-goers here and when the ticket-seller glibly rattled off the strange names Mr. Cushing's ear caught the words "family circle" and he said that he would take two seats there.

When he arrived at the family circle with his guest, he found he had made a mistake, but as the play was beginning and the view of the stage was good, the two men decided to remain. Soon



COLON S. OBER



CHARLES F. PARKER



CARL A. PERKINS



JOHN F. KEARNS, JR.



DANIEL P. JEWETT



THOMAS C. GARDINER



WILLIAM B. MCCLINTOCK

in one of the quiet speeches a baby near them, that had been smuggled past the doorkeeper by its mother, began to cry, and at the first sounds of "Hush! hush!" from the auditors, the mother adjusted her dress and began to nurse the infant. At this there were more exclamations and one man grumbled loudly at such an exhibition, as he said that the woman should be ashamed for nursing her child so publicly. The man continued to grumble until his neighbors were much disturbed and efforts were made to keep him quiet. At last Mr. Cushing turned to the disturber and said in a dignified manner: "My dear sir, why should not the mother nurse her child here? Certainly there is no more proper place for such an act than the family circle." The man joined in the laugh against himself, and mother and babe were left in peace.

Up to a short time before his death Mr. Cushing came to the store regularly, excepting during the hottest days of summer. For many years his advice was sought eagerly by the buyers, as he had a remarkably extensive knowledge of merchandise. It is seldom that a man who is an expert on teas and coffees is fitted also to pass on the quality of all other kinds of groceries, but whatever was brought to Mr. Cushing's attention was judged with a nicety that made him famous among the brokers, who were always anxious to obtain from him a good opinion of their wares, knowing that if he said that an article had merit, there was slight chance of any one's ability to prove otherwise.

MR. SWALLOW'S ACCIDENT

A. MORETON SWALLOW was born in Nashua, N. H., and educated at Townsend Academy. His grandmother was Lucy Emerson, a cousin of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was not until he had passed his majority that he came to Boston and entered upon a mercantile career here. He was on Elm Street for several years with J. Blanchard & Son, a firm that changed its name several times during its existence. In 1868 he became a salesman for Silas Peirce & Co., and three years later, when Fitzroy Kelly was admitted to the firm, Mr. Swallow also was made a partner. He remained with the concern until 1890 when he retired, at that time being the oldest member of the firm. After his retirement he lived quietly at Quincy, Mass., near the homes of two of the former presidents of the United States, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, until his death in 1901. Many of the old customers of the house will recall the severe accident that befell him a few years before his retirement, when his head was crushed by a descending freight elevator. Miraculously he escaped permanent injury but was confined to his bed for many weeks. He was genial, always courteous and smiling, and something of a philosopher. At the time of the accident he was questioned closely as to the manner of its occurrence and if he became insensible. His reply was: "No, I knew everything that happened and the only thought that came to me and that kept repeating itself in my mind, was, 'What a fool I was to be so careless!'"



ARTHUR C. ENGLAND



LOUIS B. WESTON



HERBERT H. PRICE



RAYMOND HALL



PERCY E. CHARLES



MERVILLE R. BARKLEY



FRANCIS W. B. SCOTT

EDWARD H. NICHOLS entered the employ of the firm on January 7, 1868. The son of William Nichols, for twenty-five years the principal retail grocer of Lowell, he graduated from the public schools of that city and obtained a position as page at the State House under Sergeant-at-Arms Morrissey. Always pleasant and courteous, the lad soon made friends with many of the legislators. These friendships he kept throughout his life, and legislators who became figures of national importance were always willing to serve him in every way.

In 1859, while he was a page, the Prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward VII, visited the State House and was presented with an old firearm that had a special history. The boy was bright and attractive and was chosen to hand the weapon to the one who made the presentation speech. The papers of the day had much to say of the comely lad who assisted at the ceremony.

He saw the sea-fight between the Monitor and the Merrimac, when he was acting as clerk in the Post Office at Fortress Monroe, Virginia. After the Civil War he joined a group of Ohio prospectors who were seeking oil in Canada. Returning to this city he went to work in 1868 for Silas Peirce & Co., and on January 1, 1876, was admitted to the firm, retiring in 1900. His wife was a daughter of Silas Peirce, 2d, and was much interested in benevolent and philanthropic work.

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS YOUNG

On April 1, 1890, the firm celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary by a dinner at Young's Hotel. Attention had not been called to the affair in advance, and the guests, including a few prominent men who were friends of the first Silas Peirce, and the reporters, were the only ones who knew of the dinner. The Boston papers gave long accounts of it, and a few weeks later a veteran journalist said that hundreds of dollars could not have purchased the space that the press of the country gave to this remarkable event, for there were few newspapers from Maine to California that did not comment on the unusual fact that a firm in this country had retained the same name for three-quarters of a century, with one of the name always taking an active part in the business.

WHAT THE EDITORS SAID

The *New York Sun*, ever ready to say a few words about Boston, took as its text for a long editorial, "The Peirces, Grocers," which began as follows:

"When the old-line pepper and salt Bostonians, who are not ashamed to wear chin whiskers or to call for beans when there is a crowd present, want to have a high old time and to keep the Hub revolving fast and furious, they have a dinner at Young's Hotel, and a mighty fine event they generally make of it, too. The most recent



INGRAHAM B. RYDER



JOHN J. SCOTT



THOMAS HENDERSON



FRANK G. SPARHAWK



WILLIAM H. HENDERSON



GEORGE HENDERSON



JOSEPH J. RODOLPH



FRED W. GRIFFIN



MAURICE F. FITZGERALD



THATCHER B. STREETER



EDWARD S. DEARMOND

celebration of the kind was given in honor of Silas Peirce, who, it is averred, enjoyed the distinction of being at the head of the oldest grocery firm, not only in New England, but in the United States."

The New York paper was not the only one to say editorially pleasant words of the celebration. The *Boston Transcript*'s editor thus referred to the dinner:

"Seventy-five years is a good old age, and is indicative of a strong constitution or a strong character, or both, in an individual. In this country, where business changes are so frequent, the house that attains its seventy-fifth birthday may well be congratulated on its years and honors. Such an anniversary has more than a personal interest, where, as in the case of Silas Peirce & Co., the record of the firm is that of a long career of probity and industry which have reaped rich rewards. It is an object lesson which, in these days when so many young men are tempted to make short cuts to wealth, though the path to riches is only to be successfully travelled by the patient and industrious, we feel sure cannot be too plainly presented. A business career of seventy-five years is a history of itself, and is suggestive of history, for the founder of the firm was in business for himself when James Madison was President, and very likely in common with other merchants of the time anxiously awaited the tidings of Napoleon's campaign in Belgium,

and received the news of Waterloo as a matter of great moment to the trade of the United States."

The *Boston Traveler* was much interested in the business relations of the house with some of the older American mercantile establishments, and on the day after the dinner gave this item a place on the editorial page, heading it, "A Mercantile Coincidence":

"A fact growing out of the dinner given by Silas Peirce & Co. to their employees and friends last evening is the following: The books of Pierre Lorillard & Co., the oldest tobacconist firm in the country, established in 1760, show an open account with Silas Peirce & Co. as far back as 1826. As the Lorillard & Co. have retained the same firm name, as well as Silas Peirce & Co., this is probably as old an account between two American houses without change of name as can be found."

A LAWYER'S REMINISCENCES

William L. Foster, a well-known lawyer of Concord, N. H., sent a letter in regard to the anniversary that embodies so much information as to the early days of the firm from one who was acquainted with its members, that it is here given in full.

"My 'reminiscences' of the firm of Silas Peirce relate to a period when the firm had reached its majority and was about thirty years of age. Those recollections are fresh and pleasant, but

they have nothing of ‘anecdote’ connected with them, and nothing of special incident.

“My memory especially recalls the uniform kindness and gentlemanly courtesy and consideration which the firm of that day extended to a raw and inexperienced youth.

“My acquaintance with the firm was made about 1844, when I was engaged in trying to learn the rudiments of law in the Harvard Law School of Cambridge, under such teachers as the ever sunny and cheerful (I had almost said jolly) Judge Story, and the sharp, shrewd, critical — the sly and crafty (in no bad sense) — Professor Greenleaf. We used to call him ‘Crafty Simon.’

“I lived in Keene, N. H., with my father, who kept a grocery store there, and whom I assisted as his clerk in my vacations. He used to go to Boston three or four times a year, to buy groceries, etc., and most of his trading was with your firm.

“When I went with him from Keene, we used to take the stage coach (sometimes, I guess, with B. P. Cheney for driver) about four o’clock in the morning, and we would drive into the stable yard at No. 11 Elm Street (Wildes’), about eight o’clock in the evening. In the summer this was about the time when the watchmen carrying a little ladder under their arms, were going about lighting the street lamps filled with fish oil.

“While I was at Cambridge, my father would occasionally send me a letter containing a list of goods which he wanted, and I would go to your store in Elm Street and bargain for them. I would examine critically the samples of sugar, molasses, tea, coffee, etc., and would sometimes make a purchase so extensive as to amount to perhaps \$40 or \$50—a big sum for me in those days. I heard nothing about a ‘sugar trust,’ but I knew I used to get trusted for sugar. Mr. Peirce, Mr. Cushing and Mr. Hall were, one or all of them, in personal attendance, waiting upon customers, and Mr. Crane kept the books in a little seven by nine office fronting on Elm Street. I remember distinctly every line and expression of the countenances of these four men, and I recall the handsome, bold chirography of H. N. Crane (written with his quill pen), and which I should recognize and swear to, today.”

Mr. Crane, the bookkeeper, was named for the famous British Admiral, Horatio Nelson. In the seven by nine office that Mr. Foster mentions, the bookkeeper walked back and forth in front of his desk day after day for many years. Tradition says that on one occasion, when members of the firm were in the cellar inspecting some merchandise stored there, Mr. Crane suddenly descended upon them feet first, much to their consternation. The board on which he stood had been worn so thin that at last it had given way. Years afterwards Mr.



ONE OF THE FOUR-HORSE DRAYS IN USE AT BOSTON

Crane's grandson entered the employ of the firm and remained with it for several years.

DOWN THE HARBOR

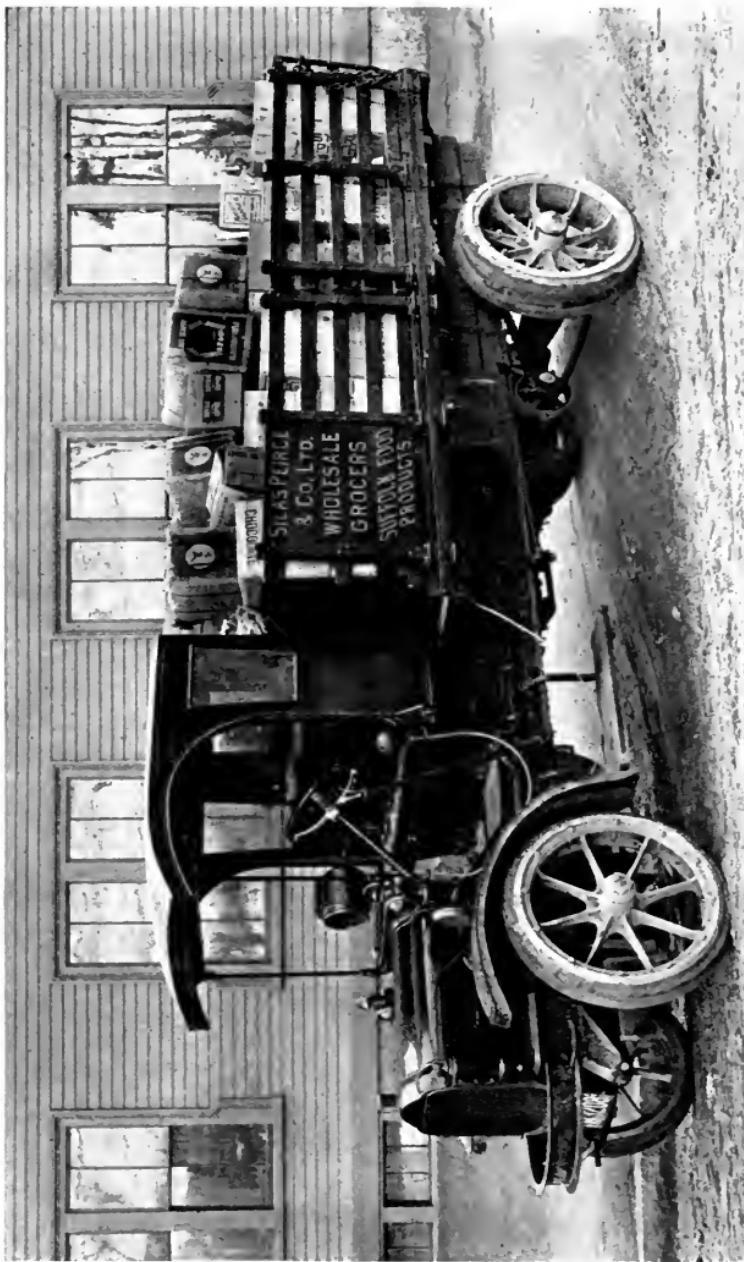
During the celebration of Merchants' Week in 1888, the firm entertained its customers in a novel manner long remembered by those who accepted the invitation extended to every one who had purchased goods of the house within two years. On May 16 a steamer of the Nantasket Line was chartered and eight hundred customers enjoyed a trip down the harbor. A band of music and a bounteous lunch pleased the guests, and when the steamer docked late in the afternoon the large gathering from all parts of New England had learned more about the harbor than many of those present had ever known before. For a long time it was a favorite jest of the drummers of rival houses to ask customers if they were buying goods now of Silas Peirce & Co., so as to get an invitation to the harbor excursion. For months after the harbor trip the firm continued to receive letters from gratified customers. In several instances these letters stated that the writers had never before seen the salt water.

JOHN JONES, JR., SKOWHEGAN, MAINE

As in every store that employs a number of clerks, the firm had from time to time men who form picturesque and fantastic figures on the background of memory. One of these was a tall, raw-boned Down-Easter, John Jones, Jr.,

by name, of Skowhegan, Me., who stood nearly six feet six in his stockings and was blessed with a wife that was considerably under five feet in height. Jones, a typical Yankee, had a striking personality and first came to the attention of the men in the store from his reply to the cashier. The latter had on hand a large number of silver dollars and when the men went to the office for their pay on Saturday night, he would ask: "Can't you use a few dollars in silver?" Jones was a new man and the cashier, not dreaming of a refusal, passed over the larger part of the weekly wages in the cumbersome coins. Jones quietly passed them back with the remark: "Thank you, I don't care for these; my sidewalk's paved." He was an original character with a ready wit that made him known not only to the clerks in the other stores, but also to the salesmen from distant cities who came to sell goods to the firm.

Returning to his native town he lost one arm and a part of his other hand by the premature explosion of a cannon while celebrating the election of Grover Cleveland as President. It became the writer's duty to appeal in his behalf not only to the grocers but to outsiders. Curiously enough, the name John Jones, Jr., of Skowhegan, Me., was a handicap, as many considered it an alias. Indeed, one savings bank in Boston refused to accept a deposit in his favor until assurances were given that John Jones, Jr., of Skowhegan, Me., was a real person.



ONE OF THE SIX TRUCKS IN USE AT THE BRANCHES

SHIPPER AND BOOKKEEPER

Among those who saw long service with the house and who will be recalled by customers of a former generation were George S. Richardson and Charles W. Dodge. Young Richardson was universally known as "Chub," a curious corruption of Sherwin, his middle name. He began when a little boy to ride to the store on one of the teams and on Saturday afternoons would try and help the men. While still very young he was taken into the store and in time rose to be a shipper. He died at an early age, leaving a wife and baby. His memory has been a pleasant one to the older employees and customers.

The loss of Mr. Dodge, a bookkeeper, was severely felt. The tragedy of his death is one of the saddest events in the history of the house. He was always interested in gunning and every year spent his vacation on the North Shore, where he was well known for his success as a sportsman. After the death of Mrs. Dodge, he decided to get away from the familiar places for a time and made preparations for an extended gunning trip, trusting that the change of scene would be beneficial. He went to the Boston & Maine Railroad station to take a late afternoon train and shortly afterwards his body was found on the tracks. The cause of his death remained a mystery for twenty-four hours and then a passenger on one of the outgoing trains who had read an account of the accident in the papers, wrote to the *Boston Journal* that he had seen the accident the day before. He stated that a man was walking

up and down the platform, apparently waiting for his train to be made up, when a train came in on a "flying switch" and struck the edge of a trunk that projected from a pile of baggage on a truck. The trunk, whirled through the air by the force of the blow, struck the man in the throat, and just as the passenger saw him fall, the spectator's train started from the station. It proves how difficult it is to fix the responsibility for accidents and crime when a traveller can be killed outright in a station filled with people and the mystery of his death solved only by the merest chance.

EARLY BOOKKEEPING

A few of the old books of the concern are preserved from the days when the grocer worked sixteen hours on with eight off for sleep, and when the only holidays for the clerks were Fast Day and Thanksgiving. In one of these early books are entries that exhibit the humors of bookkeeping — or rather of petty cash. "Cleaning streets, 20 cents" is one entry, and the question has been often raised as to the amount of work that the street cleaners did for two dimes. Other entries show that on March 23 the concern purchased "one cat, 25 cents; March 24, one do., 25 cents; April 1, one rat trap, 88 cents." Evidently rats were as numerous in a grocery store then as now, and the two expensive cats, after a week of trial, were discarded and a good stout rat trap set to do the work.

In another book used in 1821, at a time that Mr. Peirce carried on some retail as well as wholesale business, are the names of many of the first families of Boston, including those of J. Putnam Bradlee, Abel Adams, and Francis Parkman, D.D., father of the historian. This old book has delighted scores of antiquarians. It is a model of neatness and exactness, and every entry was made with a quill pen. Some of the charges are interesting as showing the extraordinary prices of nearly a century ago, such as currants at 22 cents per pound, figs at 4 cents per pound, whole allspice at $33\frac{1}{2}$ cents per pound, and nutmegs at \$1.90 per pound. Cigars were \$2 per thousand, while the same number of cheroots cost 25 cents more.

FIRE AND FROST

One cold day in January, 1886, when the mercury was far below the freezing point, a clerk in a butter and eggs store at the corner of Clinton Street and Quincy Row, opposite the back doors of Silas Peirce & Co., at 1 and 3 Mercantile Street, while lighting eggs, dropped the candle into a crate of straw. In an instant there was a blaze which he tried to smother with blankets, snatched from the horses that were shivering in front of the store, but the fire was too quick for him and he found it impossible to extinguish it. Soon the department was called and the alarms were rung in rapidly until all the available

apparatus in Boston was engaged in fighting the fire. Meanwhile the mercury kept dropping lower and lower and the firemen were frozen to their places. Indeed, one fireman on the aerial ladder was so covered with ice that he could not stir and his companions went to his rescue with axes and chopped him away from the ladder to which he was frozen. The business of the section was at a standstill. The weary firemen found that they could work but a short time before they became so numb that their fingers dropped the hose. The rear doors of the Peirce store were opened and the fire fighters invited to enter and have hot coffee, sandwiches and other food that the firm provided.

All day long great pots of coffee were kept hot on the huge old-fashioned stove that occupied the center of the salesroom. Mr. Peirce's two daughters came to see the fire and were pressed into the service of waiting on the firemen. The store was kept open all night and the young women remained until midnight serving hot coffee. The next day they helped again, as there were a large number of firemen at work on the burning building. The "all out" signal was not given for eight weeks and three days, as the greater part of the building was filled with flour and canned goods packed solidly in storage, which burned all this time.

Meanwhile the cold weather continued and the water froze around the burning store. At

A Cold Fire in Our Neighborhood



night the building looked like an ice palace lighted from within, as the brilliant glow from the fire shone on the glittering masses of ice. Sleighing parties came from far and near to admire the sight that was the talk of the town. It was said that the contractor who removed the accumulated ice agreed to do so for one hundred and fifty dollars, expecting to put on a force of men that could easily do the work in twenty-four hours. As a matter of fact they worked day and night, including Sunday, for a week before the tons and tons of ice were finally carted away, and the contractor's loss was several hundred dollars. The picture of the ice-covered building was photographed on January 13, by one of the clerks, Benjamin J. Bowen, from the top of a low building on the "dump" built for the storage of potatoes. Mr. Bowen, who had shown much artistic talent while with the firm, afterwards took up painting and is now one of the principal members of a colony of artists in Brittany, his pictures having been exhibited several times in the Paris Salon.

HORSE HIRE

Prices of horse hire in 1823 are shown by a bill that Silas Peirce, 1st, contracted that year. For a horse and chaise to Roxbury he paid one dollar, while the same conveyance to Scituate cost him five, a saddle horse to the latter place being one dollar less. For a four days' trip with horse

and chaise to Amherst, Mass., he was charged ten dollars, and at one time when he went to Scituate for two days the stable keeper charged him only five. Once or twice he had a "hackney coach," but there is no record to show where it went. However, as the price was a dollar and a dollar and a half, it is surmised that he did not go a very long distance. By 1834 prices had advanced somewhat at the livery stables. In that year a saddle horse to Brookline or Cambridge cost a dollar, while a horse and chaise to the latter place cost fifty cents more. A horse and chaise to Lynn was two dollars and a half, and a post chaise to New Bedford was eight dollars. A horse and chaise to Newton was two dollars and a half, and to Marblehead fifty cents more.

OLD BILLS

During the preparation of this history a large amount of correspondence was found, some of which went back to the early days when the Founder was beginning to make a name for himself in the town. Probably when the firm moved to Commercial Street the greater part of the books and the correspondence was destroyed. However, there were one or two books already mentioned which came from the second Dock Square store, and there are quite a number of letters and many bills from Elm Street. These bills were from dealers in various commodities, and the descendants of these merchants have been seemingly much pleased to receive

SILAS PEIRCE & CO. ¹⁸⁵⁸
WHOLESALE GROCERS

SILAS PEIRCE & CO.
WHOLESALE GROCERS



Portsmouth Branch

these old invoices signed by the name of a grandfather or distant relative. Several of these bills are for advertising in the *Courier*, the *Gazette*, the *Transcript* and other papers of four-score and more years ago.

At first each bill was written out entirely by hand, as printed billheads were not introduced into the store until more than a quarter of a century after the business started. The invoice reproduced was

Mr D. Peirce Boston Oct 1829
Bill of Silas Peirce & C
1 Cash Drawing - 2 1/2 \$938
Recd Pay S P & C
Per H P Cushing

made and receipted by Mr. H. P. Cushing. It was fortunate for the salesmen of those days, who often had to make the bills, that customers purchased in larger quantities than at present, so that there were not as many items.

Discrepancies in the prices of different articles are noticeable on some of these bills. For instance, one member of the firm was paying two dollars and seventy-five cents a week for board in a first-class house, and at the same time he was obliged to give

a dollar and a half each for his shirts. In many cases a lad was hired for a certain sum and his board, and on a number of bills there is an adjustment of the amount to be paid for the young clerk's board and lodging.

MONEY DRAWER AND SAND Box

One of the curiosities that is shown to visitors is the old money drawer used by the first Silas Peirce when he started in business. The small, time-worn little till is rather different from the modern drawer now used as a money receptacle. It has been worn thin in its years and years of usage, and probably would not stand much more service. Another curiosity is the old sand box that can be traced back almost to the beginning of the concern's existence.

“To BE CALLED FOR”

At the present time the branch stores are connected by rail, but it is a curious fact that while the Boston store in its early days had business with New Bedford, Plymouth and Portsmouth, all of these places were served by packet. Large numbers of receipts for merchandise shipped by coasters have been found and often the goods were to be left by the captains at certain places “to be called for.” The number of interior points that were thus served, when the captain left the merchandise on the coast and the dealer drove from the interior and carted it away, looks amazingly large in these



A.C. WILLEY
Salesman



E.H. MATTISON
Salesman



FRANK BOOMA
Office



JAMES QUIRK
Office



FRANK E. LEAVITT
Manager



A.I. HARRIMAN
Shipper



JOHN W. DOWNING
Stock Department

Portsmouth Branch



EDGAR T. HATCH
Stock Department



ARTHUR L. HARTFORD
Shipping Department



JOHN W.H. JACKSON
Shipping Department



ARTHUR E. BARNES
Chauffeur



OREN M. SHAW
Chauffeur

days of cheap and easy transportation. The time consumed by the packets in delivering goods would disgust many storekeepers now when quick delivery is such an important feature in every well-regulated business.

CURRENCY REFORM

Letters written to the house in 1834 testify eloquently to the manner in which the merchants were struggling with the changes in the currency system. William Colgate & Company, then, as now, one of the principal business houses of New York, wrote under date of March 19, 1834: "Business here has been at a stand while the public mind has been fully occupied with the subject of the National currency. The money market appears measurably relieved and business has partially commenced within a few days in this city. . . . The people look for a reduction in the price of starch; we have thought it best to fall the price in Boston to eight cents per pound and charge for boxes."

Another letter, written a fortnight later from the interior of Massachusetts, says: "I now send you one hundred dollars which is all I can send you now, which you may pass to my credit. I hope you will be as patient for the remainder as possible as we now begin to feel the effects of the Jackson administration in a sensible manner."

THE SHIP TIBER

So eager was the concern to keep posted on merchandise values in foreign countries that in the

early days an English paper with market changes was taken. There is reference in one of the Boston papers forty years ago to the house as known in the trade centers of Europe. As a matter of fact three-quarters of a century ago the name of Silas Peirce was as familiar in all the exporting cities of the Old World as it is today in New York or Philadelphia, for then the house owned and chartered sailing vessels and sent them to Italy, Greece and the Dutch East Indies. The correspondence relating to these ventures is among the most interesting that has been found, and an agreement relating to the ship *Tiber* gives an idea of these transactions. Mr. Peirce and another importer sent this vessel on a voyage to Batavia and other ports "for a return Cargo or for Freighting as circumstances may render most judicious on arrival at Batavia." It was agreed that the funds to pay for all outfits and sailing of the vessel, and for the cost of the outward cargo and insurance and all expenses on same should be equally divided. The proceeds of this outward cargo were to be invested in the return cargo. A considerable part of the investment in such a venture was in the insurance, but if the vessel arrived in Boston safely the result of the voyage was usually satisfactory. Mr. Peirce's vessels brought back large quantities of currants from Greece and he was one of the largest importers here of Italian products. There is little doubt that his voyage to Oporto did much to fashion his ideas as to the wisdom of importing goods in sailing vessels.



Pittenburg Branch

THE PARTNERS

Nineteen persons have in its century of history been partners in the concern or directors since its incorporation in 1900.

Silas Peirce, 1st	1815-1857
William Thompson, Jr.	1818-1822
William Borrows	1820-1821
William Stearns	1826-1832
Thomas Hall	1833-1857
Hayward P. Cushing	1833-1863
Charles E. Moody	1857-1868
Silas Peirce, 2d	1857-1898
Nathan Cushing	1863-1871
J. Hamilton Farrar	1863-1876
A. Moreton Swallow	1871-1890
Fitzroy Kelly	*1871-1900
Edward H. Nichols	1876-1900
Silas Peirce, 3d	*1889-1900
John B. Clapp	*1889-1900
Herbert L. Kelley	1900
Amos T. Leavitt	1900
Thomas L. Perkins	1900
F. Loring Wheeler	1900

*Partners, now directors.

THE FIRST BRANCH

Soon after the corporation was formed it was found that in order to retain the trade of eastern New England a warehouse was necessary where customers could have their wants supplied without sending to Boston. On May 26, 1902, it was de-

cided to open a branch at Portsmouth, N. H., and that date became one of the most important in the history of the concern, for after the Portsmouth store had been in operation for a time, the other branches followed as opportunity offered to open them. That summer a committee of the directors visited Portsmouth but could find no suitable place for a wholesale grocery. Finally it was decided to build, and a piece of land and a small wharf were purchased on which a one-story building was erected. Later, additional land was purchased next the store so that the building can be enlarged when occasion arises.

The manager is Frank E. Leavitt, a brother of Amos T. Leavitt of the Board of Directors. Mr. Leavitt is one of the leading men of Portsmouth and has always taken a great interest in civic affairs. For years he was president of the Young Men's Christian Association and held that office, together with several others in charitable and religious organizations, until he was obliged to relinquish some of them on account of the pressure of his other duties. He is now one of the police commissioners of the city and has done much to give Portsmouth a clean and efficient administration.

FITCHBURG BRANCH

A branch at Fitchburg was opened in 1906 in a barn that had been used for the storage of blinds. The building was in no way fitted for a grocery store but it was the only available place at the time when



R. B. DONALDSON
Salesman



EDWARD P. RICH
Salesman



JOHN H. KLINE
Office



LUKE P. MORLEY
Salesman



CHARLES W. GODFREY
Manager



STILLMAN S. RAND
Office



LEON LITTLEHALE
Stock Department



PAUL REGAN
Stock Department



EUGENE FLAHERTY
Shipper



GEORGE SURGEON
Shipping Department



JAMES PRICE
Shipping Department



DANIEL MARONEY
Chauffeur



JOSEPH J. DAIGLE
Chauffeur



OTTO HEDSTROM
Chauffeur

Fitchburg Branch

the company wished to establish a branch. In a few months, however, a handsome building that had been erected for a wholesale grocery concern was rented and here the Fitchburg business has been conducted ever since. The manager is Charles W. Godfrey, one of the oldest employees of the house, who has lived in Fitchburg for fourteen years and is one of the best-known men in that city. For some years he has served the city as alderman and is a director of the Board of Trade. Always interested in civic activities, he is vice-president of the Associated Charities and president of the Visiting Nurses' Association. He is also connected with many of the religious and philanthropic organizations of the city, and has shown throughout his career his belief that the best citizen is the man who tries to help his city.

AT PLYMOUTH ROCK

In 1910 it was thought wise to open a branch at Plymouth, Mass., a historic town, known not only throughout the United States, but wherever the English language is spoken. After several ineffectual attempts to obtain a building suitable for a grocery, a grain mill was purchased and altered to suit the needs of the company. The sandy roads about Plymouth proved hard on the horses and in less than three months one of the best animals died, having been disabled by the severe strain. A problem confronted the store manager, for he was desirous of delivering goods in the vicinity of Plymouth and yet found that it would be impossible to do so

without an extra expense for horses. For the first time in the company's history, on May 1, 1911, an automobile truck was purchased and this solved the question of transportation. Now all the branches use automobile trucks.

William H. Harriman, the manager, was brought up in the Portsmouth store and when a vacancy came at the Plymouth branch, he was promoted. The Plymouth salesman is Edward S. Averill, one of the best-known travelling men on the South Shore, where he has sold goods for more than a quarter of a century.

NEW BEDFORD BRANCH

One of the most prosperous cities in the State is New Bedford, famous alike for its past history of whale ships that did so much to build it up, and its present record as a cotton manufacturing city where different nationalities dwell together in peace and unity. In February, 1914, an opportunity came to purchase a wholesale grocery that had been obliged to give up business. The company purchased the business and retained the salesmen and clerks who had made it. H. J. Tripp is in charge of this branch and is always alert in looking after the interests of the concern.

FRAMINGHAM BRANCH

The branch at Framingham was opened last June. The most available building was a large straw factory where formerly in prosperous times nearly a



PLYMOUTH BRANCH

thousand hands were employed. It has the general appearance of a country hotel and the large amount of floor space makes it easy for the porters to handle goods.

P. J. McCormack, who was brought up at the Fitchburg store from a boy, has charge of the Framingham branch and is rapidly making friends in that section. Bion S. Jordan, the salesman, has been with the house for nearly thirty years and is known and liked in all the surrounding towns. He lives in Framingham and takes an active interest in its affairs.

MEN WHO DESERVE MENTION

There are a number of men employed by the house who have seen long terms of service. Two of the bookkeepers, George A. Gleason and George E. Pratt, most efficient clerks, are known and recognized as "fixtures" both by the concern and by the customers. Mr. Gleason was born in Milford, Mass., and is now in his forty-fifth year of service. Mr. Pratt, a Bostonian, educated at the English High School, began as office boy in 1883, but instead of strolling in and looking at the floor, as the song relates, he attended strictly to business and has charge of one of the important branches of office work.

The shipper, William Henry Henderson, a native of Roxbury, has been with the concern for thirty-five years. Formerly he was a call-fireman in a neighboring city and has rendered valuable aid

in putting out fires that have started in near-by stores.

WOMEN EMPLOYEES

Thirty years ago the concern hired Sarah J. Copithorne, one of the best spice packers in Boston, to assist in the spice department. She remained for over a quarter of a century and saw many changes in business houses regarding the employment of women. At present there are a number of women connected with the Peirce stores, as stenographers, bookkeepers and spice packers. In the Boston store are Georgie M. Macdonald, Maude S. Waters, J. Blanche Miner, Florence A. MacKinnon, and Marguerite M. Keating. At Plymouth is Beulah F. Lanman, and at New Bedford are Gertrude O. Pedro and Susan P. Miller.



EDWARD S. AVERILL
Salesman



HAROLD HALLETT
Office



R. B. KIERSTEAD
Salesman



OAKLEY A. CHANDLER
Skipper



W. H. HARRIMAN
Manager



GLEN BLACK
Shipping Dept.



C. ALTON LOWE
Chauffeur



ALTON F. PRATT
Chauffeur

Plymouth
Branch

PRESENT ORGANIZATION

SILAS PEIRCE, 3d, president of the corporation, is a Bostonian by birth and education. After graduating from the English High School in 1878, he took a trip to Europe and on his return entered his father's store. He went through the regular routine of the boy who begins at the foot, became a store salesman and in 1889 was admitted to the firm. Mr. Peirce is the treasurer of Boston University and in that capacity has done much for the finances of the institution. He is the vice-president of the Boston Wesleyan Association, and has held various offices in the Boston North End Mission, one of the noblest of the city's charities, with which his father and mother were connected for many years. A director in various railroads, trust companies and corporations, he yet finds time, like his father, to assist in looking after the affairs of numerous philanthropic and benevolent organizations. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce he takes an active interest in it and it is a fact worthy of note that the company is represented in the Chamber by seven members.

JOHN B. CLAPP, treasurer of the company, was born and educated in Boston, entering the employ of Silas Peirce & Co. on his graduation from the English High School. He was admitted to partnership at the same time as Silas Peirce, 3d, and on the incorporation of the present company became its

treasurer. His parents came from Scituate, where several members of the firm originated, as his mother lived not far from the Peirce farm, and the house in which his father was born is now occupied as a summer residence by a member of Mr. H. P. Cushing's family. Mr. Clapp has been interested in the study of the stage for years, having written many articles and several books about plays and players which are accepted as authoritative. He is treasurer of the English High School Association, which has the largest invested fund for deserving students of any public school in the United States. It is a noteworthy fact that the president, treasurer, one of the directors, the manager of the Fitchburg branch and several of the bookkeepers and clerks are all graduates of this high school.

One of the members of the present house who has seen service for more than half a century, and with a larger number of the former partners than any one else, is FITZROY KELLY, a grand-nephew of the first Silas Peirce. He was born at Winterport, Me., the son of Albert L. Kelly, a prominent attorney there. Coming to Boston, he entered the employ of the concern in 1863. It shows the changes in the city since the Civil War to learn that the lad boarded on Lincoln Street when he first arrived here. Later he made other arrangements and for a time shared the room of a clerk who slept in the noted drug store of I. Bartlett Patten, on the corner of Beach Street



NEW BEDFORD BRANCH

and Harrison Avenue, taking his meals on Harrison Avenue. Mr. Kelly emphasizes the fact that he began in the "counting room," as he says that now-a-days there is no such place, "office" being the only term. In proof of this not long ago an old-time merchant telephoned to a business house, asking if one of the partners would come to his counting room. The girl who answered the telephone did not know what a counting room was and the merchant had to explain.

In 1871 Mr. Kelly became a partner, and in 1900, when the present corporation was formed, he was made a director, although he is not actively engaged in business. While connected with the firm he was much interested in whatever related to trade affairs and was prominent in business organizations. As a director of the Chamber of Commerce he did much good work with that body. He was the second member of the firm to become the president of the Boston Wholesale Grocers' Association, Silas Peirce, 2d, having previously held that office. It is worthy of mention that Silas Peirce, 3d, has but recently retired from the same presidency. Mr. Kelly takes great interest in whatever relates to Boston, and is a life member of the Bostonian Society.

The oldest man connected with the house is THOMAS L. PERKINS, who began on February 1, 1868. He was born at Hampton, N. H., the son of the captain of a fishing vessel who was lost during a terrible storm on the Bay St. Lawrence. The boy came to

Boston and for a time worked in a dry goods store. In the winter of 1861 he enlisted in the regular army in the Engineer Corps and was sent with other enlisted men to West Point, to be trained for work in the field. Mr. Perkins left West Point in the spring and from that time until near the close of the war was always busy near the scene of hostilities.

At the time that he entered the grocery business nearly all goods were sold in bulk and it was necessary for any one in the business to be a good judge of merchandise if he hoped for success. Mr. Perkins was especially interested in molasses, teas and coffees. In a few years his judgment was sought as quickly as that of any man in the business here, and it is due to his remarkable knowledge of teas, coffees and molasses that the concern has made these departments successful.

A story that shows how remarkable is his knowledge of teas has often been told by the manager of the Portsmouth Branch, Mr. Frank E. Leavitt. Some years ago one of Mr. Leavitt's customers was a Chinaman, who dealt only in high-class goods. One day he asked Mr. Leavitt to have a cup of tea with him and later insisted on presenting his guest with a package of the tea, which he mentioned as something not often seen in this country. Mr. Leavitt, to test the ability of Mr. Perkins to judge all kinds of teas, sent to Boston a sample of the Chinaman's tea, with the message stating that this was from a Portsmouth customer and that he would like Mr. Perkins to say at what price it could be



J. B. HATHAWAY
Salesman



HERBERT J. TRIPP
Manager



E. ALTON TRIPP
Salesman



HARVEY A. SHERMAN
Transportation



ALFRED KING
Shipping Department

New Bedford Branch



JOSHUA E. DELANO
Stock Department



JAMES E. RYAN
Shipping Department



PHILIP BRIGHTMAN
Shipper



WALTER E. CUNNINGHAM
Assistant Shipper

PETER PEMENTEL
Shipping Department

matched. The latter examined the sample very carefully and after due deliberation sent word to Mr. Leavitt that the tea could not be matched in this country, and if any customer in Portsmouth had such a tea, which grew only in a certain section of China, it must have been brought to this country by a Chinaman or a returned missionary, for he had not seen a tea like it for thirty-five years. When the result of the test was reported to the Portsmouth Chinaman he could hardly credit it, believing that the Boston man must be a wizard. Among other teas that have been sent to Mr. Perkins for examination was a Russian caravan tea worth almost its weight in gold, and a tiny sample of tea that, it was claimed, was carried away from the Boston Tea Party by one of the "Indians" in his shoes.

Mr. Perkins is known to all of the older store customers and in many cases has sold the father until the business was left to the son, when he has continued to sell the son.

AMOS T. LEAVITT²⁵ is another of the managing directors who comes from New Hampshire. Born in Hampton, he graduated from the Academy of his native town, and coming to Boston found employment in a retail store. But the boy had ambitions beyond the retail business, and after a few months started again at the foot of the ladder, this time with Silas Peirce & Co., as he wished to be connected with a wholesale business. He went with the concern on October 3, 1887, and worked hard during

the day and in the early morning and at night carried papers to eke out his small salary. After some years he was a store salesman and besides made one or two trips a month through the country. When the corporation was formed he was made a director and has shown judgment and tact in the management of the business, always resourceful in his settlements of the problems that arise where many men are employed.

Mr. Leavitt lives in Quincy, where he has always shown a pronounced interest in everything that relates to the affairs of the city. He is an active and energetic worker in numerous philanthropic organizations and as one of the trustees of Hampton Academy has done much to keep the alumni together and maintain the spirit that characterized the school in his day. It is rather a curious fact that while neither Mr. Leavitt, nor the president, nor the treasurer were college graduates, all three have been intimately connected with educational matters.

HERBERT L. KELLEY was born in Belgrade, Me., and like many other lads of the Pine Tree State came to Boston to seek his fortune. For a short time he was with the Continental Sugar Refinery, where he attracted the attention of Silas Peirce, 2d, who engaged him, and on September 12, 1887, young Kelley entered the office of the Peirce store. Some time later the death of Paul J. Cooledge, a salesman who had a trade through certain parts of New Hampshire, left a vacancy which Mr. Kelley filled



so satisfactorily that he has travelled in that section ever since. He is also well liked in Maine, where he has sold goods for many years. He pays great attention to the details of the merchandise in the various stores and visits them regularly to see that they are properly stocked.

F. LORING WHEELER was born in Boston and was educated at the English High School. His grandfather was long one of the prominent retail grocers here and at the time of the seventy-fifth anniversary dinner of the firm was the oldest customer living. Another of Mr. Wheeler's near relatives was also a grocer, so it was only natural that he should wish to take up the same business. On September 23, 1873, he entered the employ of the firm. For years Mr. Wheeler travelled on the South Shore and was well known throughout the territory that is now supplied by the Plymouth branch. Before the present corporation was organized, Mr. Wheeler also sold goods at Newport, R. I., and was a frequent visitor there during the summer months. Of late years he has given his attention to the canned goods and dried fruit departments.

CHRONOLOGY

1793. Silas Peirce, 1st, is born in Egypt, Scituate, Mass.

1808. Silas Peirce, 1st, arrives in Boston.

1814. Silas Peirce, 1st, sails to Oporto, Portugal.

1815. April, Silas Peirce, 1st, begins business at 21 Dock Square.

1816. Silas Peirce, 1st, removes to 6 Market Square.

1818. William Thompson, Jr., becomes a partner with Mr. Peirce.

1820. William Borrows enters the firm.

1821. Mr. Borrows retires.

1822. Mr. Thompson retires.
Mr. Peirce moves to No. 2, Sears Buildings, Elm Street.

1826. Silas Peirce, 1st, and William Stearns in partnership.
Hayward P. Cushing commences with the firm.

1829. *February 11, Fire in Dock Sq & Broad St.
*February 12, Fire in Charlestown and 4 persons burnt.
*February 16, Fire in Essex St. Glass Houses.
*February 25, Blanchard's store burnt.
*June 2, J. Quincy inaugurated Pres. of Harvard University.

1830. *February 1, Dr. Beecher's church burnt morning.
*March 26, Great snow storm and very high tides in consequences.
*June 5, S. P. gone to New York.
*June 12, S. P. returned from New York.
*August 20, Mr. P. set out for Frankfort.
*August 25, Commencement.
*September 3, News recd of Revolution in France.
*November 1, Cloudy A.M. U. S. Senator elected.

1832. *February 22, Washington's Centennial birthday.
*August 15, First appearance in the city of cholera.

*Early sales books contain almost daily items regarding weather and current events.
Lines starred are selected from these records.



BION S. JORDAN
Salesman



P. J. McCORMACK
Manager



CLIFFORD W. BACKUS
Office



HENRY H. TYLER
Shipper

A decorative title card for the 'Framingham Branch'. It features a central banner with the words 'Framingham' and 'Branch' written in a flowing, cursive script. The banner is flanked by two vertical columns with small decorative finials at the top. Below the banner is a small circular dot. A vertical line with three small circular ornaments hangs from the bottom center of the banner.



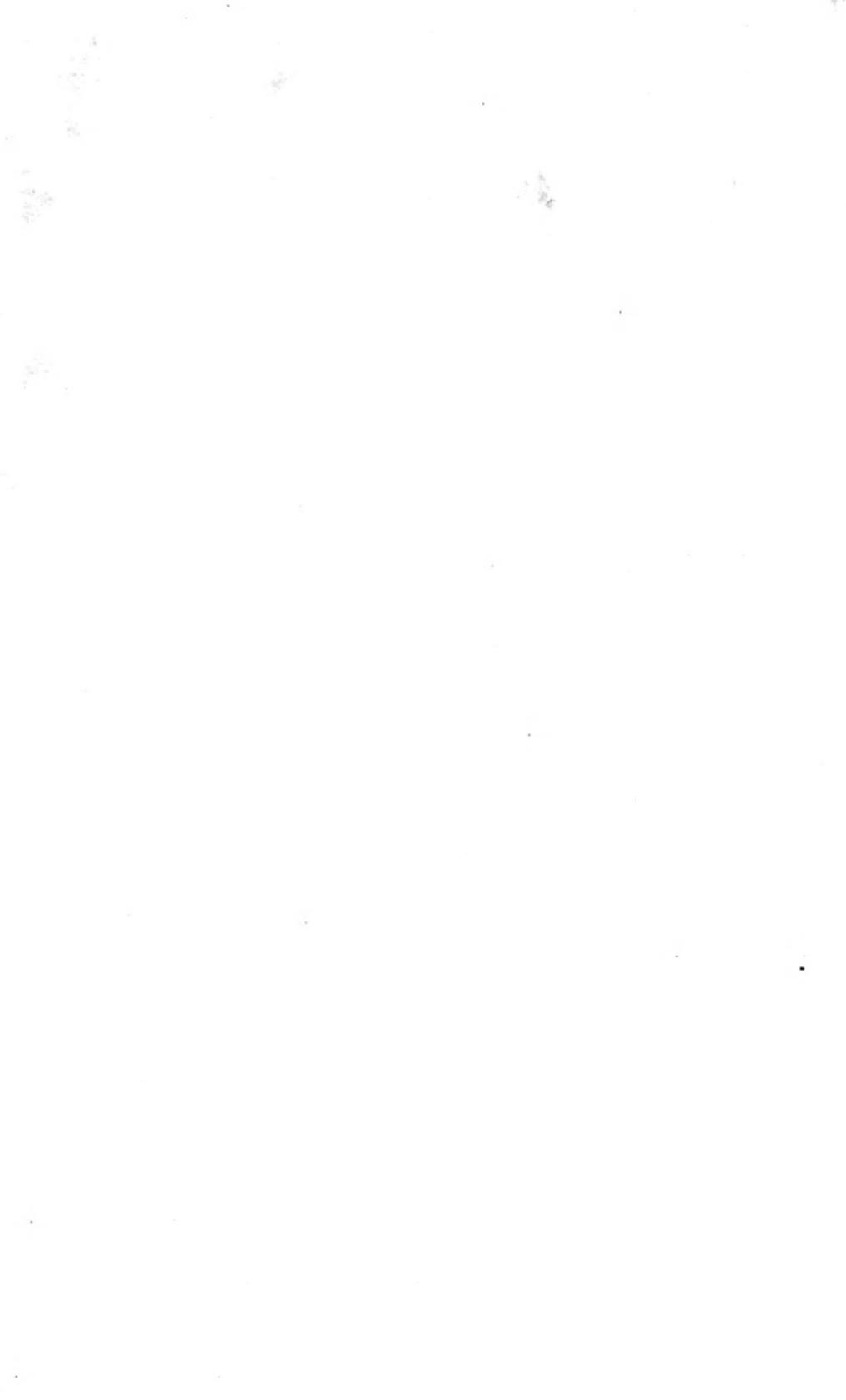
JOSEPH R. BARRY
Shipping Department



HERVEY H. FROST
Shipping Department



WILLIAM A. MORROW
Chauffeur



- 1832. William Stearns withdraws to establish the firm of Stearns & Crosby.
- 1833. October 8, Silas Peirce, 1st, Hayward Peirce Cushing and Thomas Hall in partnership.
- 1840. J. Hamilton Farrar enters the employ of the firm.
- 1845. Silas Peirce, 2d, enters the employ of the firm.
- 1853. *December 29, No business at all. Big Snow Storms no one about.
- 1854. *May 12, 3 cases Cholera reported. 2 Died.
*May 13, 4 cases reported.
*July 8, 24 Deaths from Cholera.
*July 22, 14 " " "
through Aug. to Middle of Sept.
- 1855. The firm purchases lot No. 59 and 61 Commercial Street.
- 1856. The firm occupies a part of the store at 59 and 61 Commercial Street.
- 1857. Silas Peirce, 2d, and Charles E. Moody enter the firm.
Thomas Hall retires.
*January 19, No business — Snow Storm.
*April 21, \$120.05 Total Sales, Rain all Day.
*April 22, \$5908.50 " " (Cleared up.)
- 1861. *December 31, Banks suspended.
- 1863. January 1, Nathan Cushing and J. H. Farrar enter the firm.
*January 21, Fitzroy Kelly commenced.
- 1868. January 1, Charles E. Moody withdraws to establish the firm of Charles E. Moody & Co.
*January 7, E. H. Nichols commenced.
*February 1, Thomas L. Perkins commenced.
*March 21, Sales 925.78. Snow Storm 12 in.
*March 23, " \$4421.82.
- 1869. *June 15, Commencement of Peace Jubilee.
*June 16, General Grant in Town.
- 1870. *September 14, Sales 9183.52. 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ pages on sales book.

1870. *October 20, Sales 4432.04. Earthquake.
*November 15, Geo. A. Gleason commenced.

1871. January 1, A. M. Swallow and Fitzroy Kelly enter the firm. Nathan Cushing retires.

1872. *October 24, Horse distemper.
*November 9, Commencement of Fire; loss \$100,000,000.

1873. *August 4, J. B. Clapp commenced.
*September 19-20-22, Panic.
*September 23, F. L. Wheeler commenced.

1875. *March 4, Heavy Snow Storm during the night. R. R. blocked up. All hands late.

1876. *January 1, E. H. Nichols admitted.
J. H. Farrar retires.

1877. *April 24, War declared between Russia & Turkey.

1878. *December 2, Silas Peirce, 3d, commenced (*sic*).

1879. *August 27, Silas Peirce, 1st, died, aged 86 years.
*October 9, Thomas Hall " aged 67 "
*November 3, Heavy Snow Storm over N. Eng., 15 in.
*November 13, Thunder & Lightning.

1880. *June 5, Commenced to close at 2 P.M. Saturdays during June, July & Aug. Given up after trial 3 or 4 times.
*September 17, 250 Anniversary of the Settlement of Boston. Big parade.
*September 25, W. H. Henderson commenced.
*November 13, A. M. Swallow injured.

1883. *July 9, Geo. E. Pratt commenced.

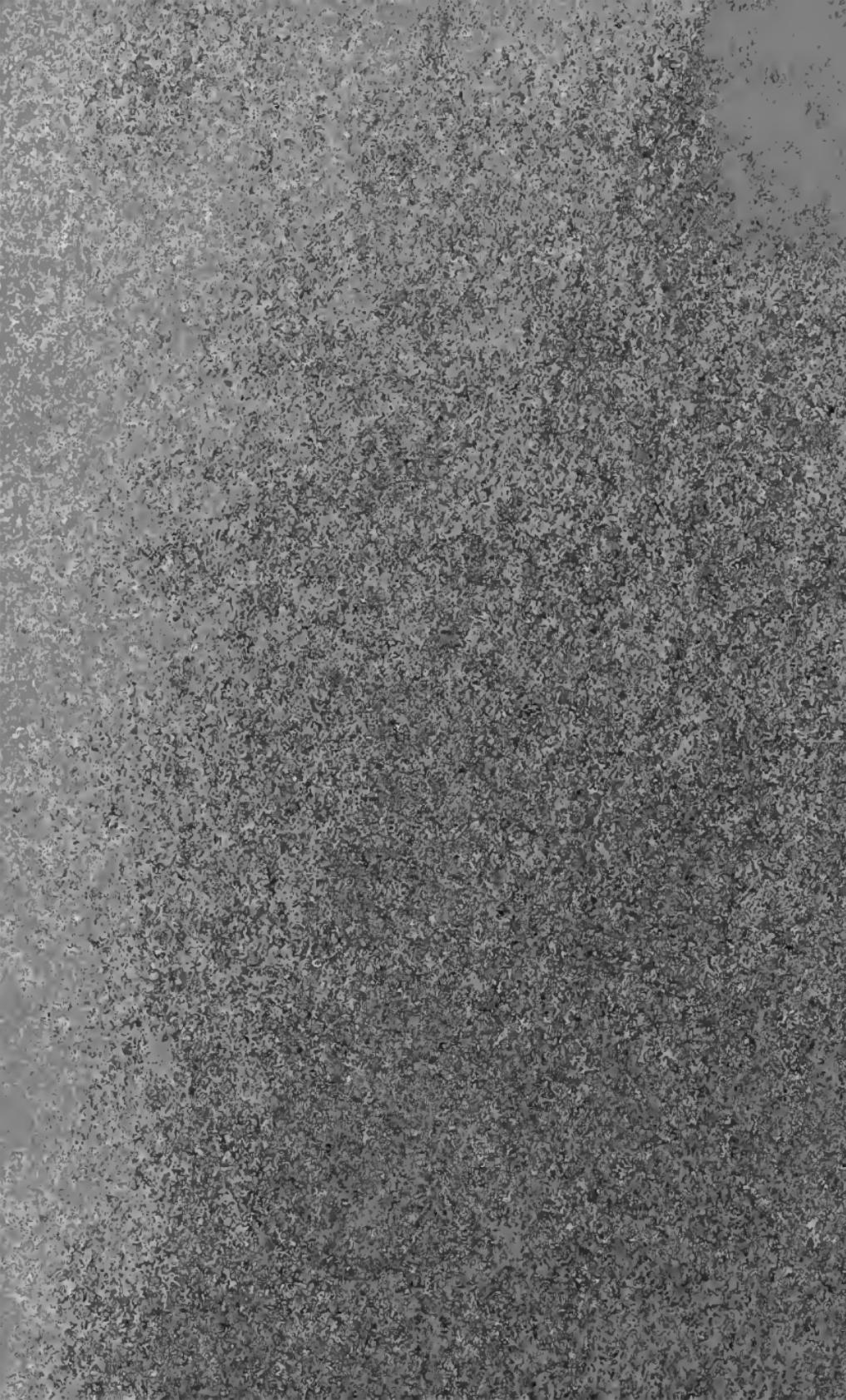
1884. *May 10, Mrs. Fitzroy Kelly receiving congratulations — it's a girl.

1886. June 1, Edward S. Averill commences.
June 30, Charles W. Godfrey commences.

1887. *September 12, H. L. Kelley commenced.
*October 3, A. T. Leavitt commenced.

1890. January 1, Bion S. Jordan commences.

- 1890. April 1, Seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the house celebrated by a dinner at Young's Hotel.
- 1900. April 1, The firm of Silas Peirce & Co. incorporated as Silas Peirce & Co. Ltd.
 - April 9, Charles F. Parker, William B. McClintock and John F. Kearns, Jr., commence as salesmen.
 - May 3, Frank E. Leavitt commences.
- 1902. November 26, Branch at Portsmouth, N. H., opens.
- 1903. September 15, William H. Harriman commences.
- 1906. June 12, Branch at Fitchburg, Mass., opens.
 - October 1, Louis B. Weston commences.
 - November 5, P. J. McCormack commences.
- 1908. September 5, William H. Eckert commences.
- 1910. November, Branch at Plymouth, Mass., opens.
- 1911. May 1, Auto truck purchased for Plymouth branch. First one used by the house.
- 1912. August 1, Arthur C. England commences.
- 1914. February, Branch at New Bedford, Mass., opens.
 - June, Branch at Framingham, Mass., opens.
- 1915. April 3, Centenary Dinner at Young's Hotel to the employees and their wives. 145 present.
 - Blizzard. Many lives lost along the coast.
 - Good sleighing in towns near Boston on Easter Sunday, April 4.



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